



SWAMI SATCHIDANANDA

**His Biography by
Sita Wiener**



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SWAMI SATCHIDANANDA
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PREFACE

I met Swami Satchidananda a day after Ram and I were married, though at that time Ram was still Richie and I was Joan. Yoga was just a term I had heard, something I was vaguely interested in.

What attracted me to Swamiji was his all-embracing warmth, his wonderful smile, the way he could look at all of us at once. Whenever he answered a question his words reached each of us in very different, very personal ways, on a multitude of levels. And it didn't seem to matter where we were at, what hang-ups or confusion was in our minds. He emanated only positive, totally loving vibrations—as if he were seeing right through the body, through ~~the~~ mind and looking right at the self which is the same in all of us.

As this book was composed, its energy came from him like a current: whenever we talked, whenever the actual writing was done.

It is divided in four sections.

The first, *Ramaswamy*, traces Swamiji's ancestry and early life, up to that time when he decided to detach himself from worldly ties.

The second, *Sambastva Chaitanya*, describes his spiritual practices and the various teachers he studied with up to . . .

The third, *Yogiraj Swami Satchidananda-East*, wherein he meets his guru, Swami Sivananda Maharaj, and starts his work in Ceylon.

The fourth, *Yogiraj Swami Satchidananda-West*, documents his leaving Ceylon on a Western visit and continues to the present.

OM SHANTI

In writing Swamiji's biography,
I have been given a great deal of help
through the letters and anecdotes
of his devotees and acquaintances,
and would like to thank
some of them here:

Reverend Pierre Benoit, o.p.

—Jerusalem

Sri Yogi Bhajan

—U.S.A.

Sri Sadhu Pithukkuli Murugadas

—India

Sri Swami Satchidananda Mataji

—Ceylon

Sri Kavi Yogi Maharshi Shuddhananda Bharati

—India

Sri Swami Venketesanandaji

—Mauritius

Sri Swami Vidyabanda Mataji

—India

Sri Swami Vimalananda Mataji

—Ceylon

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Sri Soorasangaran
—Ceylon

Sri N. Srinivasan
—India

Sri R. M. Subbiah
—India

Sri P. M. N. Swamy
—India

Srimathi P. Tambirajah
—Ceylon

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—U.S.A.

Miss Amy Tosi
—U.S.A.

Mrs. Wendy S. Turner
—England

Sri P. S. Venkataswamy
—India

Mr. Jai Weiner
—U.S.A.

Mr. Hari Zupan
—U.S.A.

Mr. Arjuna Zurbel
—U.S.A.

Swami
Satchidananda

RAMASWAMY

As a boy my main goal was happiness, a constant happiness. And I searched for that happiness through externals—through people, through possessions, through positions—always looking for that elusive joy.

South India.

It is hot. The sun burns down, close to the ground, baking the earth white where there is no vegetation. But there is always a breeze. You can hear its voice moving through the leaves of the coconut trees and the palms. Up above, the long, swordlike blades clack-clack against one another.

The breeze dies down for a time and the hills become silent. Nearby a crow, slick-black, screams from its branch—frightened by an animal or perhaps quarreling over a bug—shivers, flutters up, brushing the branches with its wings. And the whole crow clan rises in a flapping black cloud, circles the tree, twice, then settles back to stillness.

The air is wet, too. Little rivers run down the brown skin of the farmers on the road. Down between their toes, squeaking in sandals or under bare, white-dusted soles. Cows roam along the roads, moving their heads slowly and patiently in the moist heat. Dogs roll in the white dust, scratching. Slowly the wheels of a cart turn a revolution . . . so slowly the great bullock pulls the load, almost a sleep-walker, lumbering down the road.

Chettipalayam is a village, lying just outside of Coimbatore, South India. It is a farming village. For most of the year, the crops—cotton, grain, tobacco, fields of

sugar cane, coconut and banana groves—live on water from the large, stone irrigation wells, built like Olympic swimming pools, 50'x50' square.

Other areas are set aside for a more natural state of cultivation. Before the monsoon, the workers plow the land. They carry large baskets filled with seed onto the fields. Up and down the acreage, back and forth. As they walk, they rap their hands against the basket. Through the spaces in the straw come the seeds, scattering rhythmically, haphazardly. And when the heavy monsoon waters turn the fields to mud, the seeds sink down, deep into the wet earth, and root.

For the body—the hands, the back and muscles—South India has plantations and irrigation fields. For the heart and spirit, she has *bhakti*, devotion. The environment is encompassing. It is all around. The heat, the moisture, the stillness, the calm are everywhere. It is natural here to be at one with nature, it is natural for devotion to grow in the rich wet monsoon soil.

There are not many gods, there is only One. And that One has no name, no form, no place. He is everywhere—in actuality, neither he, nor she, nor it. But such abstractions cannot be grasped by our limited minds. Only when the mind expands to a greater capacity can we understand infinite things. That is why, according to our capacity, the Infinite One reduces Himself to a lower level.

To express his devotion, the *bhakta* chooses a particular form of God and expresses all his love to that form.

South India has 1,008 shrines to Lord Siva, destroyer of ignorance, 108 to the four-armed Vishnu, balance preserver. She has temples to Ganesh, the elephant-headed son of Siva and God of Wisdom; to Subramanya, second son of Siva, with his six heads and

two consorts, born to combat the demons; shrines to Brahma, the creator; to white-saried Saraswati, Wisdom Goddess; to Lakshmi, Goddess of Wealth.

The danger with the *bhakti* method of worship, its prayers and rituals, is that it may become more or less mechanical. When the rituals are not properly understood, there is a danger. Each action must have its own significance and meaning.

Early in the morning, the women of South India go out with their brooms. With swift, practical motions, they brush the thresholds spotless and scrub them till they glisten. They gather cowdung from the sheds, rolling the dung into individual balls. The balls are placed in front of the house as a representation of God, decorated with bright flower petals and fresh leaves. The dung is burnt into ash, purified for use on the altar.

Each home has a shrine room—sometimes built away from the house. The walls are hung with bright, primary colored pictures, statues and molded reliefs. Soft carpets and aromatic woven mats lie on the floor. The deity is bathed in rosewater, dressed in pure, clean garments, decorated with sandalwood paste.

To invoke the presence of God, the *bhakta* performs the *puja* ceremony. He receives the Lord as he would an honored guest. Before entering the shrine room, the devotee bathes, changes into special clothes and collects flowers, fruit and a coconut as offerings. The fruits are the fruits of the devotee's actions—offered so that no action is taken for himself. The coconut is the devotee's egotistic mind, made up of three parts. The fibrous husk is the quality of dullness, the *tamas*; the middle shell, the *rajasic* quality or ego. The white nut within is the pure, uncovered mind. Before entering, the devotee removes the husk. It is up to him to take away his own laziness—the god won't awaken him

at home and carry him to the temple. At the shrine, the ego is broken with the sword of wisdom. The white kernel alone is offered to the Lord.

A square of pure camphor replaces the white nut. It is lit with a flame constantly burning on the altar. The *sattwic* individual receives enlightenment, and when that spark is received, the individual loses himself completely. The small light merges with the Cosmic Light. When the camphor is burned, not a trace, not a mark is left to show it was once there.

Ramakrishna Paramhansa worshipped at a temple. His devotion was great but there still lived a small, prickling doubt in his mind. He wanted to test whether the statue of the deity was living. He pulled a small piece of cotton from his pocket and held it under the statue's nose. Slowly he watched, completely still. The cotton began moving back and forth as if it vibrated with the breath of the god. So when you go to a temple, remember to take God with you. Unless you do, you won't see God there inside. If you don't have God outside the temple, you won't find Him inside either.

Each individual decides on his number of births and the duration of each birth. Every action of ours has its own reaction which we have to face. And to face all these reactions, if we don't have enough time in this life alone, we are given another body.

Among the shrines and green hills and waters of six rivers lived a poet-devotee, Kuttiappa. At the age of fifteen, Kuttiappa lost his sight to the extent that he could see shapes and shadows during the day but nothing after the sun went down. To compensate for this loss, he developed his intellect in the study and creation of literature, the sciences of astronomy and mathematics.

With his nephew, he traveled to the temple of

Lord Muruga in Marudamalai. Unaware of anyone's presence, the temple priest locked the two within the shrine when he left at day's end. Kuttiappa sat motionless in meditation, unaware of the priest's departure. Sometime during the night, he felt very hungry. He called on the Lord to provide food for him. As he finished his prayer, the temple priest entered, instructing Kuttiappa to take the food from the temple kitchen kept as an offering to the deity. The nephew ran and brought rice and water. After his meal, the devotee went back to his meditation.

When the priest opened the shrine again in the morning, seeing the man and his nephew sitting in meditation, he ran over.

"Kuttiappa, I'm so sorry. When I locked up, I didn't know anyone was left inside. You must be starving. Let me give you something to eat."

Kuttiappa slowly looked up. "You must be teasing me. Last night you yourself instructed me to take the *prasad* from the kitchen. You even unlocked the kitchen so that we could have these dishes."

The priest examined the dishes in amazement. "I locked these in the kitchen, before I left. This is the play of Lord Muruga. He is the one who fed you during the night."

Kuttiappa continued to meditate. He thanked the Lord for this manifestation. Then he concentrated on his condition of blindness, seeking its cause. During the meditation, he was instructed to go to the shrine of Nataraja (Siva) in Tirupperur. There he allowed himself to be buried in an underground pit, remaining in the superconscious state of *samadhi* for 48 days. He envisioned himself in a previous birth as a Brahmin priest, in charge of keeping the lamps of the village temple lit. Instead, he had stolen the butter for these lamps and sent it to a prostitute. The eyes of the temple grew dim and, in this later incarnation, so had his own.

For the rest of his life as Kuttiappa, the devotee meditated upon and served Lord Muruga.

Six generations later, in the twentieth century, Kuttappa's ancestors established their Kaumarama *ashram* near Coimbatore, South India—Ramananda Swamigal and Kandaswami Swamigal, his chief disciple. Ten miles away in Chettipalayam was the household of their devotees and cousins—Sri Kalyanasunderam and his wife Sri Velammai, pregnant with their second child.

Sri Kalyanasunderam was the village's unofficial headman. He was a landlord who owned three to four hundred acres throughout the village. Those properties the family couldn't supervise directly were leased to other farmers and worked by untouchables. He had one of the largest homes in the village and it served as a focal point for local activities. Some days its porch was a court and those with petty quarrels came before Sri Kalyanasunderam for impartial judgment.

A poet himself, Sri Kalyanasunderam let the house serve as meeting hall for poets, musicians, philosophers, astrologers. Circuses would set up an arena on the land adjoining the house—acrobats and jugglers, animal trainers and horseback riders performed for the villagers and were treated as guests of the house.

Sadhus and *sannyasis*, wandering ascetics and holy men passing through the area, were directed to Sri Kalyanasunderam's house for free food and lodging. The family served these guests directly, rather than giving the job to the household staff. Sri Velammai washed their robes and cooked their food. Her husband and son would bring it to them.

Sri Velammai decided this was the type of child she wanted to conceive: one with the qualities of wisdom, service, detachment and love shown by the swamis her family served. She and her husband traveled sixty miles to Palani, the holy hill, to the *ashram* of Sadhu Swamigal. Velammai was given a *mantra* to invoke the Son god. She repeated it constantly, developing within a vibration conducive to receiving the type of child she desired.

Their second son, Ramaswamy, was born on December 22, 1914.

Probably I had all my disappointments in my previous lives. Otherwise, I can't think of any reason why I should have been so contented in this present one. I passed through it all before and must have learned terrible lessons. Even as a youth, somehow I can't recollect anything I was attached to very much. I had the same affection toward everybody.

Ramaswamy was the landlord's son, served by attendants, heir to those hundreds of acres of farmland. The landlords themselves never worked the land. They acted as supervisors to the untouchable workers. To Ramu, their labor appeared to be fun. It was a chance for him to do something different. He walked to the fields, begging the workers to let him use the hoe or scatter seed.

"Ramul What would your parents say? They would be very angry with us if we allowed you to do such things."

Farm work was too menial to be handled by the landlord's youngest child.

"Listen," he whispered. "No one is watching. They'll never know if I do it."

In secret, he would be permitted to use the farm-tools. On some days he would even sneak off to the untouchables' colony. Such visits were not considered worthy of a landlord's child and had to be made clandestinely.

Not only does charity begin at home. Everything begins at home, including spirituality.

Ramu woke before dawn. Early in the morning stillness, he walked to a farm 1½ miles from the house. An

acre of land was set aside for use as a flower garden. Pinks and bursting reds and yellows, flowers of particular beauty grew here for use in Sri Kalyanasunderam's altar room. Ramu jumped into the irrigation well and washed. Then changed into fresh clothes. Bending into the heavy scent of flowers, he chose a large selection and carried them back to the house, into the stone temple room with its tiled roof. Then he would sit outside and make sandalwood paste, rubbing the sandalwood against a stone and mixing the scrapings with water. After he finished, he quietly entered the cool room to watch his father perform *pūja*, the ritual worship of his chosen deity.

The room was fairly large. It had a high ceiling and was covered with various images of gods and goddesses. There was a stone *śivaliṅga*, a statue of Ganesh. Sri Kalyanasunderam's favorite piece was a large framed relief of Lord Subramanya, 3'x4½'. The god was flanked by his consorts Valli and Devayana. All were dressed in richly draped cloths, ornamented with real jewels embedded into the relief, both precious stones and artificial ones that formed tiaras, earrings, necklaces, shining bracelets. Even the Lord's spear was dotted with stones. At the end of the ceremony, Ramu's father waved the camphor lights. Each facet would catch fire, jumping and glittering, slowly dim and disappear as the camphor vanished.

A bell was rung near the end of the service. The sound drifted outside and all the household knew the *pūja* was almost finished. Velammai, the children, all the household staff would gather and join Sri Kalyanasunderam for the closing prayers. Prostrating before the Lord, they received holy ash and water from the father and bowed to both the Lord of the Universe and the lord of the house. Just before leaving, the two boys bowed to their parents and received their blessings before starting the day.

The Saraswati *pūja* was the greatest and most special of the household ceremonies. It was held during the last three days of the *Navaratri*, Nine Nights Worship.

On those days, Sri Kalyanasunderam collected all the books from his library. The goddess Saraswati was the ruler of all books, the Goddess of Wisdom. The texts were arranged to form a pyramid, steps leading up and down again. A large picture of the Goddess was taken from the wall and positioned so that the book-hill reached her waist. Covering the heap of books were skirts from the temple statues. Ramu's job was the arrangement of her jewels. Carefully, with painstaking concentration, he glued each golden bracelet, each emerald-studded earring and necklace to the head and arms of the Goddess.

On the ninth night of the festival, the instruments and tools of the house and field were presented for worship. The following day, special sections were read from holy books and then all the family would join in the careful disassembly of the pyramid.

The children of Chettipalayam centered their play around the day-to-day activities of their environment. Instead of "Cowboys and Indians" Ramu played "Priest and Devotee." One child served as the grave, omnipotent guru; another was the disciple. Their dolls were miniatures of the gods. They constructed temples out of mud and decorated them with leaves and flowers, gathering fruit for play *pujas*. Ramu's dreams and visions projected the deities as well. He favored Lord Subramanya and the Goddess Parvati, in particular. On a number of occasions, he accompanied his family on trips to the swamis in nearby Kaumaramadalayam and to Sahu Swamigal in Palani.

There is only one thing that hurts me. If I feel I have caused anyone else's unhappiness, I won't be happy. Until I see that person's smiling face again, I will feel sorry.

For several years during Ramaswamy's childhood, the verandah of his house served as the home for the village school. The school day started at dawn and the

schoolmaster had devised a fool-proof method for exacting promptness from his students.

The first student to arrive handed the master his cane. The master would hand it back to the boy.

"Hold it in your fist," he ordered. Then, he would draw it swiftly from the enclosing hand so that the boy could feel the friction and warmth of the cane as it passed from his fist.

The second boy to arrive received, for his promptness, two light raps with the cane. The third three, a bit harder. Each boy would receive an amount of raps compatible with his number in line and each rap would become increasingly harder.

Ramu could stay in bed past the dawn. He was still of pre-school age and he could lie in bed on his stomach, under the covers, and listen to the lessons as they wafted to his room on the breeze. He could learn from the comfort of his bed, far removed from canes.

The schoolmaster questioned a pupil about yesterday's lecture. Ramu listened closely. The boy cleared his throat, once, twice. He stumbled over his answer and remained silent. There was a pause. Ramu stood up on the bed, opened his mouth wide and shouted the correct answer.

"You lazy boy. Can you hear that? Even the little one knows the lesson."

"Whap." The sound of the cane, hollowly resounding on young knuckles, reached Ramu's ears. Then silence, followed by the choking sound of a boy fighting to hold back tears.

Ramu bit his lip and listened. It wasn't the expected reaction. He leaped off the bed and ran onto the porch.

"Where did he hit you? Where does it hurt?" He tried to soothe the boy's red hand.

"You little imp. Get away. It was your answer that caused my caning."

Ramu walked back to his room, slowly, uneasily. He had a funny feeling in his stomach. He resolved never to interfere in such a way again.

Ramu officially entered the verandah-school when

he was four. The entrance of a new child to the school was cause for a half-day of ritual. Both new student and teacher were garlanded and the parents presented the master with a number of offerings, including a new set of clothes.

Sets of leaves made up the school books. The master would scratch lessons onto the leaves with an iron nail. The imprints were rubbed with tumeric powder to form permanent pages. As each leaf was filled, it was bound with those that had come before.

The students sat upon the stone floor. Each had a pile of sand onto which they wrote each new letter and word with an extended finger. Erasures were made by smoothing out the pile.

First the world tempts you more and more until, one day, you find yourself bound up in it. Then you say 'No, I don't want it anymore.' The world itself gives you this revelation. It puts up all these obstacles so that you can understand the world first and then turn away from it with the urge for something more.

Ramu and his family rode in their cart to his aunt's home in another village, six miles away. While playing about the house, Ramu discovered a shining new tri-cycle. He had never seen anything like it before. It fascinated him. All afternoon he rode on the bike, maneuvering it into tight circles, racing up and down the road. When he returned home that night, he could think of nothing else. He dreamed of the new red trike. After two days, he had told another small boy of the marvelous attributes of the bike and gradually he persuaded him that it was foolish to waste another day without taking it for a ride.

"Ramu. How far is it to your auntie's?"

"Oh, not too far. Anyway, when we get there, you can have the very first ride."

With this information spurring him on, the boy decided to join Ramu on his journey.

After two hours, Velammai noticed the absence of her youngest son.

"Have you seen him?" she asked her husband and eldest son.

Both carefully searched the area and quickly reported he was nowhere around. Kalyanasunderam organized a group of villagers into a posse, sending them off in different directions.

The boys were about half a mile from their goal. They were tired and hungry and the new bike no longer seemed such a wonderful plaything. Ramu was nervously trying to gauge the distance. It hadn't seemed so far by cart. His friend was beginning to show signs of battle-fatigue and burst into tears. One group of searchers found them here—two tiny, dust-covered figures standing in the middle of the empty road.

"Where are you going?" The men asked in surprise.

Two loud wails and more tears.

"It was Ramu's fault. He wanted me to go. He told me about the bike and. . . ."

"It wasn't my fault. He wanted me to show it to him."

"No. It was. . . ."

"You walked all this distance just to play with a bike?" The men looked at one another.

"With such persistence, you should have your wish."

They were carried onto a cart and driven to the bike's home.

Just before evening, when the boys were preparing to be taken home, his aunt called to him.

"Until you get one of your own, why don't you borrow the tricycle for awhile. It will save wear and tear on everyone."

The parents should not think they have given something of their own to the child. It is the child's own quality that enables him to come into a particular family and behave in a particular way.

A yearly, five-day conference was held in Perur at the Sad Vidhya Sanmarga Sangam of Sandalinga Swamigal Mutt. During that time, a number of well-known lecturers and swamis were invited to address the conference's visitors. Sri Kalyanasunderam was an annual speaker.

Ramu was ten years old. He asked his father if he could accompany him to the conference, not only to listen but to give a short talk as well. At these spiritual conferences, there was no hard and fast rule about who could and who couldn't speak. If the leaders of the conference agreed, anyone who applied could give a talk.

"Well, it's a big, big gathering. Several thousand people always show up. What will you talk about?"

"Ummm. Suggest a subject for me and give me a few points to discuss."

His father decided on the topic of non-violence, *ahimsa*, covering the important points. Then he made arrangements to place his son's name on the speaker's roster. Ramu was scheduled to speak on a day when Subbaya Swamigal, a particularly well-known swami, would preside as chairman. Actually, the swami's full name was . . .

Ramu practiced and practiced—not only with his talk, but with the correct pronunciation of the monk's name.

At Perur, the hour arrived. He felt thoughtful, rather than nervous.

Subbaya Swamigal read from the schedule, "Now Ramaswamy will deliver a lecture on *ahimsa*."

He smiled at the tiny form of his guest lecturer, mounting the platform with such a serious expression. He was the youngest speaker in the conference's history. Embracing Ramu warmly, he lifted the boy to his lap and instructed him to give the talk from that position.

"First of all," a loud, high voice, "let me offer my humble salutations to the chairman of this session, Sennai Sri Jagathgurupidam Nayachandra Vedanta

Bhashkara Srimath Mahamandaleshwara Veerasubbiah Jnana Desikendra Swamigal and to you all."

The perfect recitation of this complex name drew a prolonged round of applause. The swami had never expected such a thing. He insisted Ramu sit by his side throughout the session.

As long as Ramu lived in that area, he was a guest speaker at the conference.

To love your neighbor as your own self, you must see your neighbor as yourself. Perform your duty as a neighbor when he is in distress. Help him. Do what you can.

Ramu was promoted to the government elementary school. His interest was mainly in scientific subjects, rather than history and geography. Scientific subjects could be proved, they didn't deal with theory alone. Things could be put together, manipulated. There was fun in it also.

Geography class was held under the supervision of a particularly strict teacher who insisted the students bring a number of textbooks with them to class each day.

He turned his attention to the youngest member of the class.

"Angappa. What is the answer to the question I just asked?"

The boy didn't know.

"Don't know? Well open your book and read me the information."

That day Angappa had committed the cardinal error of attending class empty-handed. He managed to compose himself, leaned over and borrowed another boy's book. Turning to the proper page, he began to read the required passage in a shaky voice.

"What happened to your book?"

"I-I'm really sorry, sir. I forgot to bring it."

"You forgot!" He raised his eyebrows dramatically.

"You forgot! Then why are you coming to class for study?"

Ramu could feel the boy's discomfort within himself. He watched carefully.

The teacher continued, "It's something like a barber going out to give a shave without his razor."

A great silence engulfed the class. Shaving was menial work, below the dignity of boys such as these. They were shocked at the insult.

Angappa began to shake—a barber!—he burst into tears.

Ramu's sympathy for the boy increased. He was especially fond of Angappa's good nature and innocence. Immediately he stood up.

"Sir," he addressed the teacher. "I have a doubt."

"A doubt? What is it?"

Angappa continued to cry.

"The same doubt as you had."

"What is your doubt?" The teacher was impatient. "Tell me."

"If you go to give a shave, will you forget your razor?" He looked straight at the teacher.

"How can you ask me that?" The teacher's voice rose. "How dare you compare a teacher to a barber!"

"Sir," Ramu answered softly. "I just returned to you the very words you used on this boy . . . and look how unhappy they made you. When you yourself can't swallow it, how can you expect it of another. And he is just a young boy. Even you, an elderly person, didn't have the strength to gulp it. We are here to learn geography, not shaving. You are here to show us the way."

The teacher took a deep breath and nodded his head. He tried to smooth things over.

"Don't worry, Angappa. Forget it. See, someone has even come to take your side."

"No sir," Ramu corrected. "I'm not siding with him as an individual, but I'm siding with his cause. Please excuse me if, for this process, I have hurt you. But I felt very sad about what I saw."

"Alright. Let's forget all these things. Sometimes words will accidentally slip out of the mouth."

The events of the day spread to other teachers. For many days, they approached Ramu, shaking his hand or patting him on the back.

"You are really a man of guts."

"No. Probably, if the teacher had said that to me, I would have kept quiet. It was Angappa's sorrow that upset me and made me react in that way."

A spirit of detachment doesn't mean that you run away from the world and become no good for it. On the other hand, you are the best person to do something in the world because you have the proper understanding.

A coathanger stood in Ramaswamy's bedroom. On its flap top was placed a piece of glass, particularly prized by Sri Kalyanasunderam, which he had collected.

Rama entered the room and quickly snatched his cloth from the hanger. For a moment, the glass was suspended in the air. Turning over, it fell to the floor, breaking into pieces.

Ramu sighed. He recognized his haste but realized there was nothing he could do now to salvage the glass.

"Muthu," he called to the servant. **"Come here. Please collect the broken pieces and throw them in a place where no one will cut themselves."**

As the boy gathered the glass, Sri Kalyanasunderam reached the room.

"Ramu," his tone was sharp. **"That was a very precious thing to me. Did you know how much I loved it?"**

"Yes father," Ramu said quietly. **"I know you liked it very much."**

"You know that? Well, it is obvious you don't care. I don't see any unhappiness in your face over what you've done."

"I really am sad about it, father, and I realize my mistake."

"It doesn't seem so by your expression."

"I just feel there's no need to cry over spilt milk. But if that's what you want, then I'll cry." He turned to the servant, "Come on, Muthu, stop picking up the pieces. Let us both sit here and cry for a while and see if the pieces will come together again."

Muthu stopped his collecting. Sri Kalyanasunderam became furious.

"You are talking *Vedanta* to me?" He called to his wife. "Hey, come listen to your great *Vedanti*. He broke a precious object and now he talks philosophy over it."

Sri Velammai entered the room.

"I can tell Ramu really feels sad over it. But by your anger, or his tears, you're not going to get it back. When he says he realizes what he has done, you should accept it and finish the matter there."

A long time afterwards, Ramu's father was still calling him "The Great Bala Vedanti."

Ramaswamy had joined the Cub Scouts and eventually became a Boy Scout. He entered high school, living in the youth hostel set up for the students and allowed to go home about once a month. Then he went to upper high school at the government art college in Coimbatore.

Chemistry and physics fascinated him. Ferreting about the railway station, he discovered a goldmine of old batteries, thrown away when their current was exhausted. He turned his room at home into a lab and workshop. Its contents spilled into the halls and kitchen, out onto the verandah and into the yard. He would leave the opened batteries exposed to the sun, where they became re-charged. At the time, Chettipalayam's only source of electricity was the electric lights he constructed at home. He assembled pistons and wheels into a small steam engine.

"Ramu, ugh, greasy bolts and wheels all over the clean house. This isn't a workshop, it's a home. Please keep your property in your own room, not all over the house."

No man is an untouchable. Differences come, not with the work one does nor the caste into which he is born, but with the state of mind. We are all one and the same. All are God's children.

Home from school, Ramu walked through one of the farms, three miles from his home. There was a farmhouse on this farm, adjacent to the land worked by the untouchables and sometimes the family would spend three or four days out at the farmhouse in order to supervise various projects. When it was cool and dark, the family sat on the stone porch and discussed the following day's assignments with the workers, who sat around red bonfires, shooting licks of flame into the night.

That day a wind picked up, blowing the clouds into a thick grey curtain. The household staff ran back and forth from the clotheslines, gathering the garments before the oncoming storm watered down.

In the fields, the untouchables continued their plowing, unmindful of the storm, stripped to their loincloths. When they worked, they removed their single outfit, kept it safely not too near the field where it wouldn't get soiled, and dressed again at the end of the day.

Ramu's eyes traveled from the workers, small dots against the smoky sky, and the buzzing of the household staff, back and forth.

White flashes of heat lightning slashed into the ground. The throbbing drum of thunder grew closer as fat drops poured down, drenching the farm. Still the dots in the fields continued their work, intent only upon completing that work set aside for the day. The ground squished between bare toes and their hair became slick as sheets of water dripped onto their heads and ran down their backs.



With the end of the storm came the finish of the day's work. The untouchables shouldered their tools and walked to the huge tamarind where they usually kept their clothing. Instead of the piles of soggy material they expected, they found nothing—not a stitch, wet or dry.

Ramu watched them from the verandah, noting their distress. He called one of the workers to the porch.

"Don't worry. All your clothes are safe in the large hole in the tree trunk. I think you'll find them quite dry in there."

The dark face broke into a toothy smile. The worker would have gladly hugged Ramu for this news but instead he stood still and bowed his head to the landlord's son, an action conforming to the indoctrinations of the caste system.

As the untouchable ran off to spread the news, Sri Velammai approached her son.

"Ramu, how did you know their clothes were in the tree?"

The son recognized her quiet but threatening tone.

"When I saw that the rain was coming, I put them there myself."

"You put them there? You touched *their* clothes? How could you? Really, Ramu, you know the way things are." She began to lecture him on the regulations of caste.

"Mama, you may lecture all you want, and I am really sorry to hurt your feelings, but how could I let their clothes get drenched when I was able to prevent it? They would have had to spend all the night in damp, cold garments. They might even have gotten sick." Then he placated her. "Come, it's your turn now. I'll perform all the necessary purification processes you desire."

Under her instructions, he removed his clothes and left them outside the house to be washed. Then he took a bath before re-entering.

"Well, Mama, it looks as though you'll have to purify the whole farmhouse. Remember, I was practically standing inside when you found out about my deed."

"Don't be funny. You've irritated me enough for one day. Don't make it worse by pulling my leg."

He was always quick to denounce the injustices of the caste system and could never agree to the long, theoretical explanations of his elders about the differences between man and man. To him, they were all the same—mixtures of good and bad. While living under his father's roof, however, he observed the customs as he knew his parents would be terribly unhappy and confused if he didn't. Yet, he never failed to greet the rationalization of these rules with hearty laughter. Later, when he married and had a family of his own, he taught his children, "The workers know all about the land. Don't think they are ignorant. They are wise. You must always treat them as your own parents and respect their words."

One and the same thing can be both good and bad. Whenever you speak of good, bad is also present. The world is a mixture of both. There is not good without bad. They are both sides of the same coin. Both are necessary and we have been given a free will and discriminating capacity to select what is beneficial to us and to avoid what is detrimental to us. Even cobra poison can be good when taken in the proper dosage.

Though the house of Sri Kalyanasunderam followed a strictly vegetarian diet, there were certain relatives who ate meat. Meat was sometimes served at these homes, though cooked in a separate kitchen, using a different set of utensils for preparation and served in a dining room other than that in which vegetarian food was served. The children of these relatives generally played within the thick jungle bordering their home. It ran and crawled with game who lived amongst the tall shade trees and dripping creepers. And often they would hunt and trap within the woods. When Ramu came for a visit, he would usually go along on their hunts as a bystander.

He followed closely behind the boys, watching them swagger through the bushes, shotguns slung over their shoulders, bragging about the fine kill they were sure to make.

"Shooting doesn't seem to be so very difficult," Ramu thought. "And with all their talk, they rarely ever bring down anything. Shooting seems to be just a matter of concentration. Probably, I could shoot every bit as good as they by simply concentrating."

The boys were busily aiming their guns here and there, not giving their targets much cause for worry.

Ramu stepped forward. "Mind if I try?"

One of the boys squinted his eyes at Ramu. "Have you ever used a gun before? I don't remember seeing you shoot before."

"Actually, no, I haven't. But it really doesn't seem to be something I couldn't do."

The boy looked at his gun reluctantly. "Well, if *we* haven't gotten anything today, I'm sure you won't but . . . here . . . you might as well try it."

Ramu slowly lifted the gun and raised it to his shoulder. High in a tree above perched a pair of birds. Carefully, he pointed the barrel, looking well into the sight, and pulled the trigger. Two things happened simultaneously—the gun tore the air with a loud crack and the larger of the two birds fell from the tree, floating down, turning over and over in mid-air.

A great rush of accomplishment welled from his stomach—abruptly quelled by a mournful crying sound. The female bird was shrieking through the forest. Down she flew, calling and crying, fluttering nervously over the body of her mate.

Ramu dropped the gun as if it were studded with spikes. Then he, too, fell to the ground. His blood sounded like the ocean in his ears. His heartbeat speeded to a point where he thought he could no longer breathe and would surely faint. His partners, on the other hand, were whooping in joy around him.

"Get up, get up." They thought he was joking. "You told us you never shot before. That's impossible. You

brought down that bird with one try. How great." They applauded him and danced about.

Their hero remained prone on the jungle floor. Nausea stirred in his throat. He was filled with disgust, sick at what he had done. He could hear the continued cries of the female bird.

Finally, propping himself up with one hand, he rose from the ground, hardly able to conceal his shivering body.

"I can't believe what I've done."

"Neither can we. You were absolutely fantastic."

"Think what you want. For me, that was the first and last time I'll senselessly hurt another creature."

He walked from the woods, followed by his confused relatives.

To the surprise of his relatives, Ramu accompanied them to the jungle for another shooting trip. Silently, he tracked behind, gunless as usual.

Stock-still, they halted as one. Far away a bird sang briefly. Treading cautiously on her thin, dappled legs, a deer walked toward them, unaware of the men or their guns.

Two guns were soundlessly raised. Painstakingly. Slowly. She came closer. Seemed to catch the scent. No, she was still approaching, directly into the sight of two shotguns.

An explosion rang out. Ramu, last on line was shaking with a fit of coughing. As his companions turned quickly to see what had happened, the deer took off and within seconds was far away, leaping through the brush.

The group continued when Ramu's fit subsided. Soon they were gliding soundlessly through the woods again. Not even a branch moved as they passed, not even a leaf. Tension began to set into strained muscles as the hours passed. Then one noticed a small greyish ball snuffing about the roots of a large tree. A rabbit. Even a rabbit was worth the sport after all this time. But before they could raise their barrels, Ramu let loose an epic sneeze. The small animal vanished.

"I knew this would happen if we brought the *ahimsa* lover along," one boy said with annoyance.

"First the deer, now the rabbit. Every animal in the jungle must have run away after that sneeze."

Another said, "The first time, I thought his coughing was real. Now your little trick has become quite obvious."

"I'm hungry and there's nothing to cook."

Ramu didn't answer. He began slowly walking, looking down on the ground. Eventually, he leaned down and began gathering a wild cereal.

"If your problem is really your hunger, follow me."

He borrowed a cooking pot from a neighbor's house and expertly built a Boy Scout fire, roasting the cereal with a number of sweet herbs.

"It's quite good," a boy said grudgingly.

As they began to fill their stomachs, tempers subsided along with their hunger.

"Is this so much worse than eating animal flesh?" Ramu asked.

It is difficult for young boys with full mouths to answer such questions.

We are all playing our parts and in our worldly roles we have various relationships. We have duties toward one another—the son to the parent, the parent to the son, the boy and the girl to teacher. We should perform these duties well without becoming involved with them too much.

Ramu was a thoughtful, independent boy. He knew what objectives he wanted and devised his own means for getting them. Although he was against anyone thwarting his plans, he served his parents lovingly, helping them in any way he could, listening to their advice patiently, though not always taking it. Custom plays a large part in Indian family life, much more so than in the West. He followed the customs to the ex-

tent that his parents would be gratified but he always sought new solutions.

Sri Kalyanasunderam was a poet, whose specialty was the complex construction of poems into visually attractive designs—words would form a group of snakes, coiling about each other. Poetry was devised so that it could be read up or down, right or left and still make sense. Some could be read circularly, round and round until the central thought was reached.

The kerosene lamps burned into the early morning hours. The father sat in bed, propped up by pillows, unable to sleep without completing his verses. Ramu would sit by the side of the bed, calling out different word suggestions.

“Dad, why don’t you use this one?” An adjective would click. The rhythm of the poem could continue unimpaired and the poem was completed. Sri Kalyanasunderam would pull his son onto the bed, slapping him joyfully on the back, shake his hand, and fall asleep.

Ramu entered the Agricultural College, in order to round out his schooling. He studied dairy farming, crop rotation, animal husbandry. In the morning and evening, he spent some time in prayer and, whenever he had the opportunity, took part in temple services. A month before graduation, he entered the dean’s office.

“I have just come to say goodbye. I’m leaving school now.”

The dean stood up. “Why, what’s wrong?”

“Oh, nothing’s wrong. I just feel I’ve completed my studies and there are no further courses I’m interested in taking.”

“But Ramu, don’t you realize you’ve got only one more month until graduation. Don’t you want your diploma? Why not wait till graduation.”

The student looked around the office, scanning the desk and the walls covered with diplomas, certificates, all neatly framed in gold.

“Well sir, I have no need for that piece of paper. I’ve come to this school to take in what it could teach me.

Now that it's finished, I have no reason to stay here just to receive your certificate."

The dean nodded his head uneasily, looking up at his paper-covered wall, shook Ramu's hand and watched as he walked out the door.

Ramu had picked up information in all fields of farming. He had picked up something else during his college years, the habit of cigarette smoking.

Even a businessman, when he deals with a customer, should feel he has sold his goods in the proper way, serviced the customer properly, and that the customer will be happy with it. That is a fair business. If, on the other hand, he expects the customer's money even for selling him trash, it's no longer a business, it's thievery. The businessman should be interested in selling the customer products he himself uses.

Ramu's uncle owned a growing automobile business in Coimbatore, India's first importers of British cars. He also imported motorcycles and metal bodies for building trucks and buses. Ramu was eager to join this type of concern. He was very proficient in handling engines and machinery so his uncle brought him into the business. It was during the days just prior to World War II. They foresaw a great scarcity of gasoline and, realizing just how dear it would become, decided to produce engines capable of burning other types of fuel: kerosene or charcoal-burnt gas. Ramu thumbed through his issues of "Popular Science" and "Popular Mechanics" to find the proper instructions. He had come up with many finds in these magazines—folding bicycles which he ordered for himself and later sold to others through the business, various shiny gadgets for machinery. Neither of the two had any knowledge of welding, necessary for the production of the needed gas plants. Ramu decided to travel to Ceylon where this training was readily available. He and his uncle began to lay plans for the trip.

His relations in Chettipalayam were shocked. Even trips to North India were rare. In their memory no one had ever traveled to a foreign country.

"Your son is only twenty years old," they reminded Sri Kalyanasunderam and Velammai. "He's still just a boy. How can you allow him to move to a strange country?"

Patiently, they explained, "Throughout his life, Ramaswamy has always done exactly what he's wanted. Now that he's a man, you can't expect us to stop him."

Ramu became well acquainted with Ceylon and her culture. He traveled throughout the island, making excursions to various places of religious pilgrimage—the shrines of Kataragama, Munuswaram and to Adam's Peak.

In the scientific life a person lives for himself using his knowledge for himself while in the religious life that same scientific knowledge is utilized for others. Even in the religious field, if a person leads a selfish life, he is really living a worldly life.

The trustees of the Perur Temple of Lord Nataraja approached Sri Kalyanasunderam with an urgent request.

"Do you think Ramaswamy will take up the management of our temple? He seems to be the proper person for the job and we are in great need of such a manager. The previous manager is gone."

"Well, I really can't answer for him. My son is in Ceylon studying certain technical matters. Probably, when he returns to India, he'll want to go back to his business."

The trustees were persistent. The temple lands were large, consisting of two villages and all their acreage and had been donated by the kings of India. They waited until Ramu returned and approached him directly.

To Sri Kalyanasunderam's surprise, Ramu agreed. He felt it an opportunity to serve the Lord.

"I'll do it on a temporary basis. Until you find someone to your liking who can replace me."

Ramu was familiar with the Perur Temple. Since childhood, he had been very fond of its large statue of the dancing Siva, arms raised gracefully to the side, one leg balanced in the air between steps.

As the temple's executive officer, it was Ramu's job to supervise the temple's finances, organize its festivals, take care of the managing and leasing of temple lands, oversee the maintenance of the temple.

After the final evening prayers, in the humid black nights, when all the devotees had left for the day, Ramu would decorate the image of Nataraja with all the ornaments in his charge, light the flickering flames of hundreds of lamps, and spend the night in meditation.

After a number of months, the temple trustees found another manager and Ramu returned to his uncle's business, renewing his acquaintances with both machinery and cigarettes.

A third partner had been taken on, Mr. Gabriel, a Frenchman. He introduced Ramu to an extra embellishment, the drinking of great quantities of coffee and not the watered-down variety but a heavily percolated brew of black, syrupy liquid. Ramu mixed his with a few drops of milk and four spoonsful of white sugar. He had a standing order at a nearby restaurant. Every half-hour an attendant would come in with a steaming, fresh cup and remove the cold dregs of the former one.

When Lady Nicotine comes in, even though you want to divorce her, she won't leave you. Instead, she will dig in deep, to the very marrow. And not only that, she will call in another sister, Caffeine. So, take care of your senses and even if you don't practice *pranayama*, the yogic breathing, don't spoil your regular breathing with the uniyogic inhalation of cigarettes.

Ramu leaned over a mass of pistons and oily wheels. He realized his cigarette was cold, hanging from his lips dead. He reached into his pocket for a fresh one and somehow was reminded of a visit to a close relative long ago, a chainsmoker.

He had sat near the relative, playing as the man did some work. As he worked, he smoked, and as he smoked he coughed, retching up gobs of sticky mucus. He looked through the phlegm spit into his handkerchief, trying to find something. Calling Ramu to his side, he showed him a small, hard, leathery object.

"Do you know what this is?"

"No."

"It's a piece of my lung."

"Your lungs are supposed to be inside your body. How can that be?"

"Because I smoke so many cigarettes my lungs are now flinty, completely ruined. Each time I cough, a little piece like this comes out."

"Tcch. Why do you show it to me?"

"To teach you a lesson. Maybe if I show it to you you won't do the same thing when you're older."

Ramu stood up in his workshop, hand in pocket, preparing to do the same thing. He withdrew the pack from his pocket and chunked it into the garbage, breaking the habit.

We go here, there, to this place, to that one, always looking for the happiness that is there inside.

Ramu left the automobile business for the cinematographic field. South India's movie industry was concerned mainly with the production of super-sensational religious myths, glittering with thousands of costumes and extras. He concerned himself with production and distribution. Sometimes, he traveled from village to village with the films, as a representative of the film company. In the smaller areas, he himself did the projection of the movie, handled all advertising and took

care of collections. As the customers came into the theatre, Ramu and the theatre's manager would be at the door, dividing the profits there and then. After learning the trade, he returned to machinery and technical matters, starting his own welding workshop. He treated his workers more like brothers than subordinates, sitting with them, helping with their jobs.

During World War II, a government ammunition factory decided to erect a new chemical plant in the Blue Mountains of India. Allied engineers were commissioned to work on the structure but the project's supervisors needed a master welder. The Labor Commissioner asked for such a man and various technical engineers gave Ramaswamy's name. A representative of the plant was sent to Ramu's factory, where he was invited to take the job.

"As you can see, I have my own workshop to think about. But temporarily I'll go to your chemical plant and see how the work is proceeding. If I enjoy that work, I'll stick to it and work for you until the plant is completed. Anyway, I'd like to do it as a service for the government."

He closed his workshop and traveled to the plant. Enjoying the work, after a week he decided to wind up all of his workshop's outstanding jobs and close it on a more permanent basis.

He walked through the plant, past the clanking and grinding din of the workers' voices, to the Chief Engineer's office.

Sitting down, he told the Engineer of his decision.

"I think all I'll need is a three day leave. In that time I can wind up my own business and return here."

The Engineer regarded him inquisitively. He himself was a man with a mission.

His answer was one of practiced patience and confidence, "But Ramaswamy, our work here is of the utmost urgency. If you leave, everyone's work will have to stop until you return."

"Well sir, it's just for three days."

Slowly, explaining a complex theorem to a small

child, the Engineer stressed, "Ramaswamy, I don't think you fully understand the urgency of *our* work. No one can work with you gone." Visions of loitering, fully paid workers passed through his mind.

Ramu was equally patient. "Anyway, I must go wind up my own work. I too am still paying my workers all the time I am here. There is no work for them to do either without me."

The Engineer grasped the arms of his chairs, his practiced patience shredding swiftly.

"Ramaswamy, it's absolutely impossible. There's no way I can grant you leave."

"If you won't accept my request for leave, please accept my resignation."

The Engineer turned away and thought for a long time. Ramu sat patiently awaiting the outcome of his deliberation.

"According to the Law," the Engineer smirked. "we can even arrest you and put you in jail for refusing to work on this *government* project."

"Fine."

"What?"

"Fine," Ramu repeated. "If you want to put me in jail, if that is your chosen course of action, do it. Otherwise, I will leave. My freedom is very important to me and if you don't put me in jail, I'll leave."

The Engineer offered to double Ramu's salary.

"I didn't come here for money. I came to offer my services to this country. Money isn't my main reason for wanting to be here. Either allow me to go or put me into jail."

The Engineer left the confines of his chair and desk. He paced up and down.

"My own son is working here," he said. "At least stay for another few days and train him to take your place."

"I came here to work, not to teach. If you want your son to learn from me, that's fine. I'll take him back to my workshop and give him all the training he needs."

The Engineer sat down limply.

"Alright, alright," he sighed beaten. "Go back for

three days but as soon as you wind up your business come back here."

Ramu smiled and thanked him. That day he left the factory. If that was the reaction to any infringement of the plant's policy, he wanted no part of it. As soon as he arrived home, he drafted a letter of resignation and sent it to the plant manager.

Soon after, a furtive looking group of men from Central Intelligence entered Ramu's village. They checked up on Ramaswamy and his family and had been sent by the managers of the chemical plant who thought, perhaps, this man was a spy. After all, money didn't seem to be the motivating factor in his work so he must have been there for another, more underhanded reason. They left when they couldn't come up with the desired incriminations.

Your first duty is to make the body healthy. Without health, nothing can be achieved. Not only with higher goals, but even worldly success is based on your health, your condition. Whatever you want to do, spiritual, social, national, you have to do with your body. Your thoughts are manifested only through your body. You can fulfill desires only through your body.

Ramaswamy became interested in the study and practice of hatha yoga, studying three books of yoga postures, two by Tamil writers, Mr. Sunderam and Mrs. Kumaraswamy, and one by Swami Suvanada Maharaj of the Himalayas.

United Motors is located in Coimbatore. Its founder is G. D. Naidu, a technical genius, an inventor who owned a fleet of buses throughout South India. He was known as the East's "Automobile King." When Ramu was in his early twenties, Naidu decided to open another business, NEW, the National Electric Works, to manufacture electric motors for use in pumping and

textile mills. Naidu's factory was unable to handle the copper welding of the rotors to his satisfaction and he began sending the rotors to Ramu's factory for work. Being a smart businessman, as well as technician, Naidu invited Ramu to join him in the NEW factory and Ramu agreed upon certain conditions.

"I will not do it strictly as an employee. I must have the liberty of moving around and acquainting myself with the various sections throughout the factory—the electrical shops, the bodywork shops, the casting foundry. I would like to learn about all of these things."

Naidu agreed. "Do the welding and in your spare time go anywhere in the factory. Learn anything you want. You have full liberty."

Ramu moved his workshop into NEW. Very soon, he had fully trained a number of workmen to handle the welding, and began to travel about the factory's other sections, learning whatever he could.

Naidu called him in for tea and a talk. "Why don't you start supervising the electrical shop?"

Ramu agreed. Although he might not actually know anything about a particular section, he would go to the appointed supervisor, watch everything, concentrate and absorb. Within a few days, he had picked up enough information to advise the workers on how to do a better job. He never told them beforehand he knew nothing of their business. He began to devise various ways and means to improve the various sections and to encourage the laborers to turn in more efficient work. He also introduced a system of bonuses as supplements to the salaries.

Naidu sent him from section to section to bring up production. Ramu even worked for a time in the sales department and took charge of the bus service section at another location.

When you look after your own family, feel that it has been given to you by God to be looked after. Feel that these people have been sent to you. Have your rela-

relationships with them, but feel they are the Lord's, not yours. You have not created them and you are not going to take them with you when you ultimately leave.

India divides the life of a man into four stages. The first is *brahmacharya*, the period of study. The second, *grihastha*, in which he enters family life. The next is *vanaprastha* and it occurs when the children are old enough to care for themselves. The man and his wife leave the business life, giving up all interest in money and possessions and turn toward spiritual matters. The husband, though not ordained, takes on the attitude of a *swami*, his wife the disciple. *Sannyasi*, the final stage, is entered upon when the man gets into the spirit of total renunciation and devotes all his time to meditation on the Lord.

Velammai and her husband were concerned over Ramu's future. He was 23 and still a bachelor when most men were married and had children.

"If he doesn't marry now," the mother would fret, "he might be completely absorbed into a religious life without even tasting a life with a wife and children."

Ramu remained indifferent to their hints and prodings. His workshop filled most of his time and interest in spiritual life had been strengthened by his time at the Perur Temple. Whenever these discussions were brought up, he thought of the various problems of his married friends—economic crises, family illnesses, obligations, attachments.

Eventually, he weighed the pros and cons of the *grihastha* life and decided the lessons to be learned in a family situation were valid and necessary. He took a lovely young woman as his wife.

I loved my wife, but at the same time I wasn't attached to her.

The family was overjoyed with relief, particularly after the birth of first one and then another son. They

were confident that their son was leading an exemplary family life. It went on smoothly, contentedly and lovingly.

Normally, in Hindu family life, the wife moves into the home of the husband's family. However, Ramu rented a home not far from the factory for convenience's sake. They lived there quite comfortably with a servant and a caretaker for the two boys. Ramu's monthly bonus was used for luxury items and all their food, vegetables and grains, came directly from the family farm.

Every day, he drove back and forth from home to work on his motorcycle. Strangely enough, during these drives, unsettling doubts and misgivings would clutter his mind.

"I left home in the morning, so many hours ago. Anything could have happened while I was at work. Just say I come home and find my wife dead, with the children crying and the neighbors all around. What will I do? How will I react?"

The monologue would continue as he approached the house, leaning into the curves in the dirt road.

"I love her so much but such things are the Lord's will. If He decides to take her away, who can stop it? I can't worry about these things. When she finishes her duty here, probably she'll just pass on. I can't cry and shout to bring her back to life. If that ever happens, I will have to take it as God's will."

Closer to home.

"What will I do with the children if such a thing happens? Again, they are not mine, but the Lord's children. If no one comes forward to bring them up, I'll take care of them."

Many times such ideas came to him as he drove through the darkening trees. Five years after his marriage, Ramu was working in the factory when he received a telephone call. His wife was dead. He was surprised by his own sense of calm. There was nothing he could do and he had been through the alternatives so many evenings before. He began to think of the welfare of his children.

Soon after he left NEW, though Naidu tried to persuade him to re-consider. It was obvious to the family, Ramu's thoughts had turned to other-worldly matters. But they silently hoped this was a temporary result of his wife's death and would, in time, wane.

After several months, Velammai said, "Perhaps it's time for you to consider re-marrying . . . at least for the sake of the children."

Outside the window, in the bright heat, they could see the boys playing.

Ramu paused, "Are you having trouble taking care of them, Mama?"

She smiled, "Of course not, to me they are really a joy."

"Because if you don't want to take care of them any longer, my brother has offered to do so. I can even put them in the *ashram* school of the Ramakrishna Mission. There is no reason for me to re-marry, just for the sake of the children."

His interest in money, in business and family had come to an end. There was no need for him to learn the same lessons over and over again.

His mother felt this instinctively. "Please, leave them here with us." She felt he would soon be leaving the family for good.

SAMBASIVA CHAITANYA

You can even look for happiness through internals and miss the mark by running after God too eagerly, trying rituals, trying various austerities, searching too hard.

By renouncing the world, you don't lose anything. Once you give yourself to others, all others will give themselves to you. In the beginning of this life, people often said to me, 'Why are you renouncing? You have thrown away your house, your wealth, everything. What are you going to gain?' I would tell them, 'I'm going to gain everything.'

Ramu lived in a room in his father's house. As he devoted himself entirely to religious study and meditation, he became more and more withdrawn. The mundane noises from outside his room, people talking, floors being swept, doors being opened and closed, began to disturb him. He had become too finely sensitized to remain in the house and requested that his father allow him to live in the flower garden, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles distant.

It was the same garden to which he had come each morning as a boy. A small patch of land was cleared and an 8'x8' hut was constructed. It was very cave-like, with clay walls and a tiled roof. Outside the door, a small stone seat served as a verandah. A fence was constructed at a radius of 10'. Around the outside of the garden, there stood another fence. The two fences were equipped with locks. Ramu had one key, his father the other.

Ramu would rise and bathe in the large stone well before dawn. Next to the hut, he had planted a small flower garden, tending it into various designs in his spare time. He picked flowers for morning *puja*. The rest of the day was spent in meditation and the study of books by Swamis Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Ramalinga, Pattinather and Sivananda. To keep his body fit,

he practiced the *asanas*, physical postures designed to bring flexibility to the spine and overall perfect health. His diet was austere, limited to one meal a day at noon, consisting of *kitcheree*, a mixture of rice, *dal* and *ghee*. Sri Velammai would prepare it in the morning and send it over with a servant. For a while, she tried to induce Ramu to take some food in the evening as well, sending over coconuts to be left at Ramu's door. In the morning, the attendant would find the coconut still in front of the door, untouched. After a few days, the practice was discontinued.

This strict regimen continued for the greater part of a year. Ramu shared his small space with a number of snakes and once found a family of scorpions living less than a foot from his bed.

Though he was not aware of it at the time, Ramu had one very devoted disciple, an untouchable woman. Every day, while Ramu meditated unaware of her presence, she would come to the outer garden fence and walk around it once. Bowing until her head touched the ground, she would say a brief prayer and leave.

Whenever a number of her colony fell ill, she made a special trip to his hut. After circling the fence and bowing, she took a bit of dust from the ground to carry back to her village. When she came to the home of the sick person, she mixed the dust with water and instructed the patient to swallow it. Many people were cured.

Today that woman is over 100, almost completely blind and deaf. Yet whenever Swamiji visits Chettipalayam, he makes a point of coming to see her. He greets her with a hug, holds her hands, and inquires after her welfare, much to the dismay of the class-conscious community.

When a particular mantra is repeated, you develop that aspect within you. That aspect creates a form in

the Divine Vibration and, indirectly, the form is created within your mind to suit the quality which you expect. When that quality becomes more and more impressed upon your mind, you begin to perceive it outside as well.

Here in his flower garden home, during meditation, his first spiritual experiences manifested. As he carefully concentrated on the Goddess Parvati, his beloved deity, he felt the small room suddenly light up and fill with her unearthly presence. She appeared before him shining. With her was Lord Subramanya. After that, he often had such *darshan*, such blessing, in the small hut.

"In Coimbatore, among the Western Ghats, there is a hill called 'Vellingiri Hill,' with a cave at its top. It is far away from the dust and din, amidst silent glory and pristine natural purity. There are plenty of caves in these surroundings where, we believe, many saintly people live and meditate.

"A small group of men, headed by Dr. C. S. Ramaswamy Iyer, a leading surgeon and physician, found time to avail ourselves of a week's leave. We went to the hill for our retreat and camped at a short distance from the cave. Every day, we walked to the hilltop to offer our thanks and worship the Lord. It was in the 1940's and, by a strange and grand coincidence, we had the rare privilege of meeting a young sadhu. His face was always smiling and he had a magnificent personality. He would speak few words, but they were full of similes and metaphors, filled with the Supreme Knowledge. He would always end his speech with 'That is Sat-Chit-Ananda.'

"Not knowing his greatness, we would argue with him from our meagre knowledge, but his slow, persuasive arguments, couched in simple language, would always drive home his point, convincing us and making us look at his angle, the view of enlightenment.

**We still remember so many of his words of wisdom.”
—A Sadasivam, Coimbatore, India.**

If the food you eat is sattwic, mild, you will be able to easily harmonize the life force within you. Food that is rajasic, hot and spicy, agitates both the mind and that force. Tamasic food, food that is cold or rotten, produces inertia.

Palani.

Ramu left the flower garden to further explore spiritual life outside of those particular confines. He moved to one of Sri Sadhu Swamigal's *ashrams* built on the side of Palani Hill.

There are a number of branches of Yoga. *Hatha* is the path of purification through bodily postures; *Karma*, the path of action through selfless service; *Bhakti*, the path of love and devotion; *Raja*, the path of meditation and control of the mind; *Japa*, the repetition of a *mantra* or sacred phrase; *Jnana*, the path of wisdom and self-inquiry.

Sadhu Swamigal followed *Tantric* Yoga, in which the devotee invokes the deity's presence through certain proscribed practices, and ultimately receives that presence within. He was particularly devoted to Lord Muruga and Annapurnai, the Goddess of Plenty. Due to the manifestation of the "Food Goddess," thousands of people were fed at the *ashram* daily, the poor, the sick, and pilgrims and visitors traveling through Palani for various reasons. Food in plenty was always available. Swamigal's devotees believed these contributions of the wealthy were brought down by Annapurnai through their Swami's prayers.

A kitchen that feeds so many people is hard-pressed to remain always a *sattwic* one. There were forty to fifty different cooks and often the meals were laced with curry, chili, spicy condiments. Close devotees prepared food in their homes and brought it to Sadhu Swamigal. Ramu himself had two such devotees, Sri

Kalidas, a bachelor, and his eldest brother, Sadaipa Chettiar, who sent him lunch each noon or took him to their home to dine.

There were many evenings when Ramu would visit their shop in the center of town. They always kept a cup of milk and two bananas ready in that event.

Don't accept gifts. Don't gather too many things. The minute you accept a gift from somebody, directly or indirectly you are obliged to that person. Then your power of judgment fails. If your mind becomes obliged, it loses the impartial level and becomes one-sided. You start seeing the difference between one thing and another. It is very difficult to live without obligation, but if you care to keep the mind in a serene position, you should follow that practice.

The hill temple was shaped somewhat like a Jello pudding. While it was dark, Ramu would walk through the morning shadows to the river, three miles away, and bathe. Grey light accompanied his walk back to the hill. He walked round its base once. As he climbed, a brilliant pinkish-red light climbed higher and higher and dawn broke. At the hilltop shrine, three morning services would be held. Ramu would follow them with silent meditation.

He sat in full lotus. His gaze deep inside. All sounds were wrapped in pervasive silence.

It was the habit of certain pilgrims to bring money with them as an offering to the *sadhus* and the poor. A man approached Ramu's still figure. He held a bag of money and for a long time he watched the motionless *sadhu*. He lifted the bag and turned it over, emptying it at Ramu's feet. Quickly, the man prostrated and hurried away down the hill.

Ramu was a bit stunned by the clinking and jangling behind his closed eyelids. It took him a few moments to climb out of his concentration and open his eyes.

The pilgrim was no longer in sight but everywhere was the wink and glimmer of coins, caught in the light of the temple lamps. Money rested on his feet, on the hem of his cloth, dotting the floor around him.

Should he keep it for himself? Should he give it to the *ashram*? Should he call in the poor and offer it to them?

He looked down and shook his head. "No. The Lord has brought this money here. Let him bring the poor also."

He stood up, shaking coins from his lap. First he saluted Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth. Next, Dana-dayudapani who had helped him avoid temptation and the resulting attachment. Then he walked down the hill.

Throughout India's famous places of pilgrimage live many men acting the part of *sadhus* in order to earn an easy living off the devotees who flock there.

At the top of Palani Hill, a wealthy young man was confronted by such a "*sannyasi*" and his group of disciples. The young man was cornered by the *sadhu* and drawn into a powerful lecture on his poverty, during which the *sadhu* pointed to his lean and indrawn stomach. The pilgrim, greatly affected by these spell-binding words and actions handed over not only all his money, but the jewelry he wore as well.

As soon as he left the *sadhu*, however, the power affected over him was broken and replaced by a growing feeling of remorse and dissatisfaction. He became very depressed over his hasty action.

As he walked down the hill, he met a group of his friends. Ramu was speaking to them. He noticed the man's dejection and drew from him an account of what had taken place.

Ramu was disturbed by the *sadhu's* action. He was well aware of this particular "*sannyasi*" and his practice of performing *uddhiyana bandha*, a technique of completely withdrawing the abdomen. Immediately, he

dispatched one of his devotees to the dwelling of the *sadhu*. The money and jewelry were soon back to their original owner.

Later, he met with the *sadhu* and advised him to stop playing at renunciation.

"Instead," Ramu advised, "become a true renunciate and serve others rather than prey upon them. Then you will really get everything."

Your faith and devotion place you in the position of creating a particular form within you. Without that faith, you can never get these manifestations.

A great *siddha*, Bogar, had established the Palani Temple and effected its construction. Often Ramu sat and meditated at his tomb, Bogar Samadhi, after his regular worship.

Repeating his *mantra*, he had a vision. Bogar appeared clearly before him and began to repeat the *mantra*. He placed his right palm over Ramu's head and the devotee lost all consciousness of his body, falling into a "conscious sleep." Peace and bliss surrounded him. The physical world no longer existed.

After a half-hour, slowly he returned to normal consciousness. Bogar's form was no longer before him.

He felt he had received Bogar's blessing and initiation.

Suffering and suffering alone is our real friend, even in the spiritual life. It is only pain that will burn out all karma, not pleasure.

Siddhas are yogis who have supernatural powers. South India was full of such *siddhas*, many of whom traveled about incognito, never publicly manifesting their abilities. Some appeared to be wanderers, vagabonds, even madmen.

In Ilangi, near Palani, was a *siddha* named Paper Baba. He always carried a roll of newspaper under his arm and a stick in his hand. No one knew his age but he had been seen around for years and years. He never allowed anyone to live with him as a disciple but whenever he came across a sincere seeker, he would give him advice and send him off with a blessing.

Although he had never seen Paper Baba, Ramu was interested in meeting the man and receiving his blessings, feeling it would further his spiritual practices. He was in charge of feeding the people who came to Sadhu Swamigal's *ashram*. Placing another man in charge for the day's meals, he traveled to Ilangi.

Once there, he asked where he could find Paper Baba.

"He has just passed this way. Probably, if you run you can catch up to him."

Ramu ran to the end of the road but couldn't find the *siddha*.

Another person came along the road.

"Do you know where Paper Baba is?"

"There," he pointed. "Just rounding the corner."

Ramu saw the figure of an old man, disappearing behind a bend in the road. When he reached the bend, no one was there.

Again, he asked, "Have you seen Paper Baba?"

"Over there. Follow that street."

Finally, Ramu approached the tottering old man. He seemed to be blind, walking along the road cautiously, feeling the way with his stick, the paper tucked soundly beneath his armpit.

Ramu crept quietly up behind him. In one quick motion, the old man whirled around.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "Why are you following me?"

Ramu jumped back, surprised, but managed to compose himself. "I am a humble seeker, Swamiji. I came for your blessing."

"Oh, you see something here. I see nothing myself. Go away."

Ramu felt a bit hurt, but still he persisted in receiving the *siddha's* blessing.

"If you are blind, how do you know I am a stranger and that I am following you, Swamiji? Please don't drive me away."

"Oh, you came to inspect me, humm? Even though I'm blind, I can feel if someone is following. Now go. Run away."

"I've traveled a long distance to get your blessings. I can't just run away without them."

"You've seen me. Now you can go."

Ramu stood his ground. "I'm not going."

"I will hit you with my stick." He raised his arm threateningly.

"Fine. At least I'll have received something from you. If you have decided to bless me in that way, I'm ready to accept it."

Paper Baba brought his stick down. "You are a stubborn fellow, aren't you. Very well, come along. Follow me."

Ramu followed him into the richly appointed home of a wealthy disciple. Paper Baba sat in the center of the room and Ramu sat in a corner, watching him.

He called to the wealthy man, "See. Here is a dog that was following behind me." He turned to Ramu. "You have to feed people. Why are you still following me? Go do your job."

Siddhas know many things.

"I came for your blessing."

"Alright, come here," Paper Baba sighed.

He handed Ramu a few lines from his pocket. "Are these alright?"

"Swami, anything you give me is alright."

"Take them. All will be well with you."

Ramu took the blessing, bowed low, and returned happily to Palani.

With proper understanding, the pain and the pleasure are the same. Both are lessons. In such a light, pain

becomes pain no more. One who understands the world in the proper way will see that pain is there as a necessity, something to be risen above.

Every evening, the *ashramites* climbed the dusk-covered hill to attend the evening service. Individual black shadows, they walked down, circumvented the hill once and went to the feeding station for dinner.

Ramu sat upon a stone bench, awaiting the dinner bell. He wanted to see Sadhu Swamigal in the dining hall and have some dinner. As he waited, two people approached him, closer and closer. He realized they wore uniforms and were policemen. One wore the dress of a sub-inspector, the other of a constable. They stopped in front of him.

"Hey Sadhu," the sub-inspector called brusquely. "Who are you?"

"You have answered your own question, I am a *sadhu*."

The inspector squinted. "I can see that . . . but *who* are you?"

"A *sadhu*."

A new tack. "Where are you from?"

"I am from Palani, right here. Before that I lived in Chettipalayam, near Coimbatore."

"Hmmm. I see." He filed it carefully in his mind. "What did you do there?"

Ramu remained patient. "I had my own business."

The two policemen looked at each other in surprise, and then back to Ramu.

"Your own business? Then what are you doing in this type of life?"

"I was tired of all those things and decided to come into the spiritual life."

Doubt crept into the inspector's voice. "Is that the only reason or is there anything else?"

"Yes son, that is my only reason. If you can think of a better one, please tell me."

The inspector sneered. "I don't believe you. Nowadays there are all kinds of people disguised as holy men for various reasons or another."

It was during the days of the Congress Movement for India's independence from Great Britain. Many people had, indeed, taken to dressing as *sadhus* and went about their work for India's liberation. The British government was in a high state of paranoia, desperately trying to unmask these "spies."

The inspector continued, "You seem to be a wealthy, educated man, I can't believe you have taken up such a life for the reasons stated."

Calmy, Ramu said, "If you doubt my words, there's nothing I can do about it."

"Can you erase my doubts?"

"All I can tell you is don't be doubtful."

The inspector had made up his mind. "I think I'd better take you to my superior, the Circle Inspector." He turned to the constable. "Hey, 304, take him along. Come on. Follow me."

Rather than balking, Ramu stood up agreeably. "Where are you taking me?"

"The station house."

"Fine. Let's go."

The inspector positioned himself ahead of his prisoner, while the constable carefully guarded the rear. As the procession started, the inspector noticed another *sadhu*, half-hidden in the darkness.

"Who are you?" he commanded.

The illiterate *sadhu* began to shake violently. "Oh sir, just a *sadhu* . . . I was born near this area . . . my parents live here still . . . I have been here a number of years . . . you can ask about me from Swami . . ."

The inspector cut him off, "You seem to be okay." He judged the man's innocence by his apparent ignorance and fear. "Go away."

Instantly, the second *sadhu* disappeared into some bushes.

As the group made its way toward the town, the dinner bell could be heard ringing through the air. They continued to the station.

"*Sadhu*. Are you angry with me? Do you feel sad about this?"

"There's nothing for me to feel sad about. Why should I be angry with you? It is all the Lord's work. Probably he wants to see if I am fit to continue this life and he's just testing me through you. I am really happy that the Lord is giving me such a test. And you are just doing your duty as a policeman. You have been asked to do a certain job and you are doing it well. I appreciate it."

These words greatly disturbed the equilibrium of the inspector. He motioned for Ramu to stop and called the constable over. He spoke with him in a loud whisper.

"I am beginning to doubt that this man is truly a spy, but if we don't bring in our quota of suspects you know what the Circle Inspector will say, 'Can't you do anything? There are hundreds of people roaming around spying and you don't catch any of them.' But somehow, I don't feel we're doing the right thing in this case."

They started to walk again, discussing the matter back and forth. Ramu caught up to them.

"Sir, you need not worry about me. I know that you've been issued orders to book a number of people and, to all outward appearances at least, you're booking the right sort of man. When you present me to the Circle Inspector, he'll be very happy with you and your job will be over. Don't worry, I'll explain myself to him when we get there."

The inspector's confidence slipped another ten degrees.

"I really don't want to do this. I'm just going to leave you here. Go back to your *ashram*."

By this time, they were in sight of the lights of the shopping area.

"Now you say I can return to the *ashram*, but you see I was waiting to have my dinner. After all this time, dinner is over. You yourself heard the *ashram* bell as we walked, and that was a while back. Do you want me to return hungry? At least if you take me to the station, probably the Circle Inspector will give me something to eat. Do you want me to miss that meal as

well?" It was time to teach these policemen a lesson.

"Sir, I'm terribly sorry," apologized the inspector. "If I had money, I would give you some for food but I have none with me."

"Alright," Ramu insisted. "Take me to the station. I want to speak with the Circle Inspector."

The police were now prisoners of this *sadhu*, unwillingly following him to the station house.

The inspector stopped him. "Alright. Now just wait here in front of this store. Right around the corner are a number of suspects we picked up before. I'll go get them and we can all walk to the station together." He motioned to the constable and they disappeared.

After twenty minutes, Ramu too left. He walked over to the temple of Dakshina Moorthi, where he often went to meditate in the evening.

But the second *sadhu* had roused the *ashram*, telling a number of people about Ramaswamy's arrest and a large group of monks and devotees descended upon the station to win his release. When they arrived, and found him nowhere about, they raced all through the station, searching it thoroughly, before believing the story of the sub-inspector, that the *sadhu* had been released somewhere in the center of town.

The party left the station in great haste, proceeding to the store of the Kalidas brothers. Here too, they found no Ramaswamy and proceeded through the town, picking up more concerned devotees as the search continued.

Eventually they reached the temple. Entering quietly, they discovered the still figure of their lost brother, deep in meditation.

Ramu felt the presence of a large number of people and opened his eyes. The devotees greeted him with whoops of joy, applause and back-slapping. It was some time before Ramu realized the far reaching impressions his arrest had made.

As he left the temple in the middle of the crowd, Ramu turned to Sri Kalidas. "Come, let's go to your store where I can have my milk and bananas in quiet."

Fifteen days later, the event reached its conclusion. The *ashram* cooks were a rather fiery tempered crew and they decided to take vengeance on the man who had caused their beloved Ramu so much trouble. They laid in wait on the road for the sub-inspector and thrashed him soundly. A few days later, the inspector obtained a transfer to a distant village and moved there immediately.

All our continuous ups and downs, coming into this world and going out, birth and death, are due to our karma, and the necessity of accepting the reaction to our actions. We can't escape from it. Once an action is done, either we face the reaction in this life itself or we may have to take another body to do it. It is the reaction that binds us to take it, the reaction that uses a body and makes us experience it.

Sri Kalidas offered Ramu his small hut and its large compound area, and went to live with his brother's family. Each noon, the bachelor sent over a meal of *idli*, one of the many variations on the theme of rice and *dal*, a type of cake eaten with honey and curd.

Within this home, Ramu lived in complete seclusion for 51 days of rigorous practice and meditation. After a while, not due to any of his conscious actions, many pilgrims coming to the area would visit him for instruction. A large number of these went to him for healing. And for these people, Ramu kept a coconut shell container, filled with holy ash, just outside the hut.

"My child is sick with a stomach ache."

"Take a little ash. Go back to your child and put it on his stomach. He'll be alright."

One midnight, a local man came to the hut. "My wife is giving birth. She has been in labor ten hours already and in great pain. Please bless her with a free delivery."

"Take this ash and go back to your home. Mix it with a little water and give it to her to drink."

The delivery was smooth and immediate. Invariably, all of Ramu's cures would be effected just as he predicted. He had prayed for this power and received it. Often he would close his eyes, "Lord, bless me so that I might cure others."

After a time, though, he began to feel dissatisfaction with his methods. He felt the Lord Himself wasn't pleased. "Do not interfere with the work that is the Lord's," he remembered. "You will only lose all the peace you've gained through your spiritual practices."

He stopped asking the Lord for curative powers, thinking, "Who am I to take another man's *karma* which he must experience himself?"

After that, when people came for cures he would suggest certain rules of diet and breathing, so that these people themselves were partially responsible for the cures and it was not Ramu's effort alone. In this way, they could purge their *karma* and not be bound by any reaction.

From the Malabar State of South India came a certain *sadhu*, Swami Badagara Sivananda. By following a certain strenuous breathing technique, as well as adhering to a strict diet and a heavily disciplined life, he obtained for himself various psychic powers. He told his devotees he would even live for hundreds of years in the same body because of his powers. Many thousands became his disciples and the Swami initiated all indiscriminately into his breathing technique without, however, taking care to see that they followed all the other disciplines he himself practiced. Because they didn't have the proper preparations as a base, many of his disciples became ill or mentally troubled through their practice of the technique.

Once, while the Swami stayed with devotees in Palani, Ramu came to speak to him.

"It is not advisable for you to give this technique to everyone. If you do give it, you should live in close contact with your disciples so that you can instruct

them carefully and keep them from falling into trouble because of it. If you teach these people your own mental and physical disciplines, how to strengthen their minds and bodies, they won't misuse your breathing technique."

The Swami listened but continued as before. After a while, he sickened and passed away.

When you create a particular atmosphere in your life and your family, the soul that has lost its previous body and was waiting for another environment in which to continue its journey, selects your home, goes into your system, into the wife, and comes out as a baby. Because you have created a certain type of field and climate, a certain type of seed will come into you.

Hundreds and thousands of devotees were attracted to Palani, and all for different personal reasons.

A wealthy family, a widow and her two sons, were staying at one of the many *choultries*, housing facilities set up by charitable organizations.

The older brother was married and settled down but Govindaswamy, at 24, was still a bachelor, playing the role of the family's major problem. To make up for the absence of a father, the mother had over-protected her son to the point where he had grown up stubborn and totally out of control at many times, never obeying anyone's wishes but his own. To his mother's great and constant distress, he was a heavy cigarette smoker. Often she reminded him that he was ruining his health. His response was a deep drag on his cigarette and an exhalation directly into her face.

The family decided his behaviour was the result of adverse astrological influences and had come to Palani to beg intercession from the gods.

A group of Ramu's devotees suggested the family visit Ramu to discuss the matter. The mother and eldest son left for Ramu's hut while Govindaswamy was

out. When he returned to the *choultry* and found out where they had gone, he raced after them at full speed, coming to a screeching halt within Ramu's hut.

The *sadhu* was quietly talking with his family. At his appearance, the mother and brother became quite distressed and embarrassed.

Abruptly, Govindaswamy turned toward Ramu, nodding his head curtly. "Namaskar."

"Come in, son," Ramu motioned. "Take a seat. We were just talking about you."

"Aha," Govindaswamy's eyes glittered. He sat down heavily. "Were they complaining to you about me?"

"No. I merely had asked them how many people were in the family and they mentioned your name. Why should you feel they were complaining about you?"

"They always complain about me," he pouted. "Always find fault with me. Always tell me not to do this, not to do that. I don't like their attitude. They are always trying to impose their authority over me!"

Ramu examined him closely. "You don't seem to be that bad. I don't know why they should do that. You seem to be a wonderful boy."

Govindaswamy's eyes softened.

Ramu turned to the mother. "What do you find wrong with the boy? He seems to be quite well-behaved. Probably, he is just straightforward. He wants to know the reason behind things before blindly obeying instructions. When you want him to do something, have a little patience. Explain to him why and how."

The boy interrupted. "Can you hear what this man is saying? *You* don't feel that way!"

The mother covered a smile. "Yes, maybe we are a bit hasty with him."

"Well, don't do that. He's a nice boy. He'll be alright if you just try to understand him."

The family prepared to leave. They bowed to Ramu, Govindaswamy performing a stiff semi-bow. As they walked out, he said, "I would like to see you again."

"Fine. When you find the time, come and see me."

When the family had reached the street. Govindaswamy said, "You two go on ahead. I want to see this man alone. I'll be along later."

Ramu had won over the boy's confidence. After a while, he told him, "Even though you may be right, you should express yourself a bit differently. Others should not harbor bad opinions about you."

"Sir," Govindaswamy admitted. "There is one bad habit I do have. I smoke a lot."

Ramu laughed, "I myself had the same habit but when I realize how negative it was, I stopped. You seem to have a lot of willpower, it would probably be easy for a man like you to stop. Probably, such a move would make your whole family happy."

Immediately, Govindaswamy stood up. "I will show you I have that will. Nobody has ever presented the solution in such an easy way. I'm going to finish it off now."

He bowed a bit more deeply, left the hut and hurried back to the *choultry*. His family was quite surprised when they saw him hastily removing all his cigarette packs from his baggage.

"You have both always thought I was a weak man. Just watch."

He dumped the packs into a heap outside and set fire to them.

"No more cigarettes."

His mother was warmed more by this news than by the raging blaze in front of them.

You should never actually become angry. Just keep anger in your pocket. If you need it to clear up an injustice, use it, then put it away again immediately.

Ramu and Sri Kalidas traveled between Palani and Pondicherry by rail. During the morning, the puffing train stopped its laborious squeaking and turning to rest at a station. Kalidas suggested that he go and pur-

chase some breakfast in the station so that they could eat as they rode.

Ramu watched as a stream of people flooded into the iron cars. Then he turned toward his friend. "Probably, it would be best if you placed a piece of luggage in your seat when you go for the food, to make sure no one takes it while you are gone."

They had a long way still to go and only maximum discomfort could be expected if this distance were to be traveled in an upright position.

Kalidas carried down a piece of luggage and went to buy the food. Ramu looked out the window at the departing figure of his companion. Many people traversed the aisle, searching for empty seats. Seeing the suitcase on Kalidas' seat, they passed it by. One rather large man leaned his ponderous bulk over Ramu.

"Is that your bag?"

"No. It belongs to my friend. He's just gone to buy some food but he'll be back any minute."

"In a minute, huh?" The man looked sharply at Ramu. Certain times, people, even *sadhus*, would cover extra seats so that they'd have more room to stretch out in during the ride.

Ramu guessed the man's suspicion and tried to ease it. "He'll be back very shortly, momentarily."

"Well, how about letting me sit there until your friend returns. When he comes back, I'll simply get up and go."

"I can allow that only if you promise to get up as soon as my friend returns."

The man smiled tightly. "Of course," he agreed.

Ramu lifted Kalidas' bag and the man sat down, adjusting his body to the seat and making himself comfortable.

After a few minutes, Ramu looked through the window. Kalidas was winding his way slowly through the crowds, balancing the food on his hands.

"Ah," he turned toward the man. "My friend has returned. You can see him for yourself. You'll have to leave now."

The man remained seated, staring straight ahead as if deaf. Kalidas was rather surprised when he arrived at the seat, juggling the food. He asked Ramu what had happened.

To explain, Ramu turned toward his neighbor. "Here is my companion. Please do as you promised. Get up and give him back his seat."

The fat man glanced up at Kalidas, realizing this type of man wasn't about to fight for a seat. He leaned back, stretching. "Well, I've decided not to leave. After all, why should I have to spend my trip standing up?"

"Sir," Ramu persisted. "You made a promise to me. I don't see how you can go back on your word."

The man refused to look him in the eyes. He looked at the floor and said, "I am quite comfortable here. I don't wish to leave."

"You're absolutely not going to leave?"

"No."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive."

Ramu leaned toward him. "Sir, do you want me to throw you out of your seat?"

"You? You could do that?"

"If you really want me to do that!"

The man snickered. "I've seen many talk like you. Let's see you do it." He rooted his bulk to the seat.

A terrible, fierce look came into Ramu's face. In a second, his face took on the appearance of a lion, a jungle beast. He seemed to grow in size. Raising his arm, he turned, as if to strike the man from the seat.

Terrified and shaking, the stranger jumped up and ran from the seat. As soon as the seat was once more vacant, Kalidas sat down and he and Ramu began calmly dividing up the food. Within a few minutes, they were eating and chatting as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred.

The man watched from a corner of the car in amazement. After a while, he approached Ramu meekly.

"Sir?"

Ramu looked up benignly. "Yes, son?"

"I don't understand you at all."

"What don't you understand?"

"Aren't you a *sadhu*, a renunciate?"

"Sure."

"In just a few seconds, I saw you turn from a calm renunciate to a wild animal. I thought you were going to kill me and so I ran away. Then, in another few seconds, I saw you turn back into that calm *sadhu*. How could you have done that? Were you really going to hit me?"

Ramu's eyes lit up mischievously. "Would you like to try me again?"

"No, no, certainly not." The man stepped back quickly.

"Don't worry sir. I won't hurt you now but I might have then."

"How could you get so angry? You're a *sadhu*."

"I never actually became angry. I keep anger by my side and if I need it, I just call on it. It's something like having a police dog for a pet. When I no longer have any use for it, once again I keep it by my side."

"Thank you." The man picked up his luggage and went into another car. Ramu and Kalidas finished their meal peacefully.

Many people are interested in the so-called psychic powers. If you are sincere in your practice and devoted to the attainment of the highest goal, the powers come as a by-product. But there is a danger in them. The ego can become easily attached to them, possessed by the desire for name and fame through them. Then you become more and more bound up, imprisoned.

During his stay in Palani, Ramu met a certain *sadhu*, Swami Ranga Nath, a siddha and performer of miracles. He became fascinated by the Swami's supernatural powers and decided to become his disciple.

Ranga Nath had the ability to materialize things out of the air. Whenever he ate at the home of a devotee, he

would give the first handful of food from his plate to the host, as *prasad*. When the host received the offering, he would note its unusual heaviness for a small bit of food. Looking inside, he could find a rupee or a sovereign (the amount differed with the status of the particular host). The devotee would cherish the money as a sanctified object, believing it could attain even more money.

Included in Ramu's duties at the *ashram* of Ranga Nath was keeping the kerosene lamps lit. One day he greeted his *guru* with the news that the lamps were out of fuel and he would have to buy some more to replenish them.

"Don't worry," Ranga Nath said airily. "Bring me the empty kerosene tin."

Ramu did as told.

"See that empty room? Put the tin in there, close the door and come stand beside me."

As soon as Ramu closed the door on the empty tin, he began to hear the gurgle of liquid filling an empty container. The sound persisted for several minutes. When it ceased, Ranga Nath instructed him to re-open the door and bring him the tin.

It was heavy, liquid sloshed against its insides. When Ramu peered within, he saw it was once again filled with fuel.

The devotees of Ranga Nath were preparing a hot bath for the Swami, when one disciple joked, "How can our *guru* bathe in ordinary hot water? He should have a more spectacular type of bath."

The students laughed merrily. Ranga Nath looked around at them and bent over the tub. Carefully, he dipped his hand into the streaming water and swirled it around and around, forming whirlpools. When he withdrew his dripping arm, the bath was heavy with the perfume of rosewater.

On his way out of the *ashram* to shop for vegetables, Ramu realized his purse was empty. He approached the Swami for some coins.

"Give me the purse," Ranga Nath instructed. He weighted it in his palm for a moment and then returned it. "Open it up."

The empty lining was now covered by a ten rupee note.

"Is that enough for you?"

Ramu was disturbed. He had been thinking about such things for a long while. "Yes, Swami, I think it is enough." As he reached the threshold, he turned back. "Swami, is this real currency?" Always before he had avoided such questions, knowing they would prompt an unpleasant situation.

The *guru* raised his eyebrows. "Can't you see that it's real currency?"

"Well," Ramu said slowly. "If this is real currency, then it belongs to the government. We didn't have it before so it might have been taken from somebody's safe or even from a bank," he reasoned. "Now, if you tell me you have created it yourself, then the money is a forgery. If it is real, we have committed theft. If it's fake, we have committed forgery. In either case, we have committed a crime."

Ranga Nath's face grew livid with anger. "How dare you come to such conclusions and make such accusations! Get out of here. I don't want to see you anymore!"

"I had already decided to do just as you wish, sir. Lately, I've not been too happy with matters as they are here. I just wanted to tell you how I felt. Maybe some day you'll come to the same conclusions yourself. Here is your ten rupee note. I'm going now. Goodbye." Softly, he closed the door behind him.

Three years later, he once again met his former teacher.

"I've been waiting for you," Ranga Nath told him. "I wanted to thank you for opening my eyes to certain things. Recently I have been fasting to purge myself of these faults."

He returned to the small, remote village in which he

had been born and lived an austere ascetic life until his death.

Even with God or the Divine Word, even in serving others, don't be too eager.

The abbot of a temple in Avinasi died and a group of Ramu's acquaintances suggested to the trustees that he fill the empty position. At this time, Ramu's main concern was leading a simple life, devoted to meditation and study. His only wish was to remain as indrawn as possible at all times, to keep his concentration within rather than outside. At first, he refused the offer. After much prodding, however, he agreed to the condition that he wouldn't have to involve himself with the day-to-day upkeep of the temple and *ashram*.

The trustees eagerly agreed and with much formal ritual installed Ramu as the new abbot, a highly prestigious position.

Shortly after his investiture, the local caretaker, hired to administrate the daily problems, disappeared and was never again seen in the temple. Soon the *ashramites* were coming to the new abbot to register their various grievances over housing problems and shortages of food and supplies.

"There is no more rice. Will you please obtain the necessary ration coupons."

"I don't understand this. Your trustees said they'll take care of everything. Why are you coming to me for such things?"

He hastily dispatched a delegation of *ashramites* to the neighboring village, where the chairman of the trustees resided.

"When you see the chairman," he instructed, "tell him unless he comes this very evening to take care of these matters, I'm leaving."

He awaited the man's arrival until late at night. When it was past twelve, he called in one of the delegate-*ashramites*. "When the chairman finally arrives,

please give him this bunch of keys and tell him the abbot has gone."

His career at the temple had lasted nineteen days.

Really, you don't lose anything by renouncing. Instead you become the owner of the entire world. A homeless man can claim every home as his own. A pocketless man can thrust his hand into every pocket.

In 1946 Ramaswamy left Palani and wandered throughout South India as a mendicant. He devised this as a test period. "If there is a God, then he will take care of me." He took two vows: not to keep any money and not to ask anybody for anything, including food.

For four months, he wandered wherever his feet took him. During the first three days he had nothing to eat. Eventually, he was approached by a man who asked, "Have you eaten? You look hungry." When Ramu replied he had, in fact, not eaten in three days, the man hurriedly brought him a meal.

Whenever Ramu felt tired, he would lie down wherever he was and sleep—sometimes by the side of the road, sometimes on a park bench. He never remained in an area for longer than three days. Often he visited the temples where he was allowed to sleep on the big verandahs and bathe in the ponds. After the morning worship, the temple priests distributed food but Ramu adhered strictly to his vow, never standing on the food line. He would only eat if someone noticed him sitting by the side and brought him a plate of food.

At this time, when the trains were not completely filled, ticket examiners would allow *sadhus* free travel. In this way, he reached Kalahasti, Madras and Benares.

Velammai stood on her porch, looking into the house. She was crying. She cried many times this way

when she thought of her youngest son and sometimes she said to herself, "We could give him everything he wants. He lacks nothing here." Yet he called no home his own. He was a penniless *sadhu*, traveling about. Often she thought, "Where does he sleep? Who will feed him?"

"Mother." She turned around slowly. Ramu was home for a visit.

"Oh, Ramu," she was still crying. "Is it for this I conceived you and brought you up? Is it for this type of a life?"

He sat her down, gently. "What have I done? What I am now is your own wish come true."

"My wish? Was it my wish that you should live in poverty?"

"Who else was it that served all the saints who passed this way? Who prayed for a son just like them? You could have stopped by just serving them alone but instead you molded my character with their words while I was still in your body. Could I have become anything other than what I am? If you had prayed for a worldly son, I could have enjoyed myself in the world." He raised his arms and dropped them noisily to his sides. "Mother, you have spoiled my chances for a worldly life!"

The more we serve, the more we gain.

Ramu entered the Ramakrishna Mission at Timpurairai, headed by Swami Chidbhavanandaji Maharaj. Here he underwent *brahmacharya* initiation, a state slightly below that of complete renunciation, a sort of semi-*sannyas* state. The rites were performed by Swami Vipulanandaji Maharaj, born in Ceylon.

Included in the initiation's purifactory ritual is the shaving of the head and face by the acolyte, leaving only a small tuft of hair on the top of the scalp. Ramu's hair and beard had grown long and black since his days

at Chettipalayam and as soon as he shaved, a sudden change struck his system. The hair had served as a shield to neutralize the dense heat of the area. As soon as it was removed, Ramu came down with a very severe fever which lasted for a number of days. When Swami Chidbhavananda realized this, he allowed the *brahmachari* to grow his own hair once again, although this was not the usual custom.

On the day of the ceremony, Ramu and his fellow initiates bathed in the river and received the pure, white garments a renunciate wears until he becomes an initiated monk. They were taught the Gayatri Mantra and were presented with the sacred thread, a white string made up of three strands, representing the three subtle nerves of psychic force—the *ida*, the *pingala* and the *shushumna*—to be worn diagonally across the body from shoulder to hip. From that day until his *sannyas* initiation he was known as Sri Sambasiva Chaitanya.

Chaitanya was placed in charge of the children's hostel, attached to Ramakrishna Thapovanam, and concerned himself with the welfare of the children under his charge. The hostel contained between thirty and forty children, ranging in age from seven to twelve. His parents came down from Chettipalayam for the celebration of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa's birthday.

Velammai requested permission to sleep in the hostel and went there with her son at the day's end. They spoke until midnight.

"Mother, I'll be right back. I just have to go and check on the children."

Chaitanya quietly slipped into the dormitory, walking up and down the rows of beds. Gently, he lifted chronic bedwetters up and carried them to the bathroom. When they had finished, he placed them back in their beds, fluffing the pillows and settling the covers over their small forms. He carefully checked each child, replacing kicked off covers. Finally, he returned to Velammai.

She was in an unhappy mood. Tears dripped from her eyes.

"Mama, what is this? What's wrong?"

"You felt even two children were a burden for you. You left them and came here . . . but now look what you're doing. You're taking care of forty instead. Why don't you come home and take care of your own children?"

"You understood me in the wrong way, Mama. I never said those two children were a burden to me. But if I were home, taking care of those two alone, who would take care of all of these? By renouncing, I have not run from anything, instead I have gained even more. *Sannyas* isn't running from the problems of one family. It is taking on the whole world as your family and serving everyone. All older people are now my mothers and fathers, all contemporaries my brothers and sisters, all children, my children. Can you see that?"

"Yes, son," Velammai managed a smile. "But sometimes the illusion, the *maya*, comes before my eyes and blocks my vision. You are doing what is right."

The whole world is the home of the renunciate.

Each day, after morning *puja*, Chaitanya busied himself with the thorough cleaning of his room. One morning he collected about a tablespoon of fine dust, coaxed from cracks in the floor and the far corners of the room. Placing the dust carefully in a sheet of paper, he left the *ashram*, crossing the grounds until he reached the fence which separated the *ashram* property from a patch of vacant land. Blowing the dust onto the vacant land, he returned to the building again. As he approached his room, he was met by Swami Chidbhavananda.

"Ah, Sambasiva, what were you doing by the fence?"

Chaitanya smiled, eager to tell his teacher of his thorough cleaning.

"I cleaned my room of a spoonful of dust. It was that dust I was blowing across the fence."

"Oh . . . so only this side of the fence belongs to you? The other side doesn't so you feel you can throw dust onto it. Why can't you treat the other side as yours and see that it too is kept clean."

Chaitanya took the small conversation as a great lesson and guiding line for his future life.

Chaitanya visited Nehur, the tomb of Sadasiva Brahmendra, well-known in South India as a great *siddha* and enlightened person. He felt a light, a warmth outside of him as well as in, as he received the presence of Brahmendra. The *siddha* was blessing him and Chaitanya fell into the conscious sleep of Samadhi for many hours before returning to his normal state.

***Tapas* means to burn yourself—your body, your mind, your intellect—in order to clean them, purify them. Just as you burn dirt to convert it into pure ash, all the impurities are burnt pure in the practice of *tapas*. It is austerity, the acceptance of hardship and pain. The highest form of *tapas* is giving pleasure to others while accepting pain for yourself.**

Nature treatment or naturopathy encompasses various methods by which illnesses can be cured without resorting to artificial techniques, medicines or injections. Toxins are drawn out of the body by the application of wet packs and mud packs; disease is curtailed through the use of sulphur and other curative baths; healing is effected by exposure to the sun's rays. There are tonics used for re-building strength, and these are made of herbs.

Sri Bikkū Swamigal had served as a doctor, specializing in these cures, before he took the vows of monkhood. After renouncing, he set up nature cure camps

operating out of Saraswati Sangam in Madras. Chaitanya joined the Swami here and began learning the various treatments.

Certain areas of India had no doctors within a twenty mile radius. Generally, it was the untouchable colonies which suffered from this lack and it was to these places, in particular, that the nature cure camp brought its tents and equipment. When the Swami and his disciples had performed as much service as they could in one area, they broke camp and moved to an equally deserving location, cleaning up the effects of dysentery epidemics, washing patients, nursing entire villages.

At one village, Chaitanya treated a young untouchable girl. Her eye was swollen and festering and he administered to the ailment until it was completely cured.

The high caste people of the village came to know of this. They were incensed. At a hastily organized meeting, they decided they could no longer tolerate the presence of a group of *sadhus* who flaunted caste rules. They came to the camp as a group and shouted, "Either vacate this camp or we'll set fire to it and drive you out!"

Sambasiva tried to reason with the mob but they refused to listen. Finally, he told them, "You can do anything you want, but we're not going to close the camp."

"Alright . . . you'll see what we do tonight. We'll be back."

When they had left, the other *sadhus* became quite frightened. They approached Chaitanya with the idea of acquiescing to the group's wishes and closing the camp.

He told them, "Don't worry. I'll think of something. Just remain calm." There were many times when he had pondered over the inequities of this caste system, many times he saw its gross imbalance. As a child, his protest had been to ignore caste rules but now it was

time to actively do something about incidents such as these. He walked to the untouchable colony and met with its elders.

"What is it, Sri Chaitanya? What has brought you here at this time?"

"Do you remember when I treated the child for the eye ailment?"

"Yes. But she's alright now. Did you come to treat her again?"

"No. I came to tell you something. The high caste people have said our camp made a mistake in treating the child. They said we shouldn't have done it. Now they want us to close the camp or they'll set fire to it. They have threatened our lives."

"What? You have saved our lives and now there's a danger to your own." They became both upset and angered by the injustice.

Chaitanya continued, "The high caste people sit at home, enjoying the fruits of your toil. Day and night, rain or sun, you people go out and bring in the crops for them. Their enjoyment stems from your work. Yet they don't want you to have the simple enjoyments of health and happiness. Such things should not continue. You should put an end to them."

"Please guide us. Tell us what to do. We are ready to do whatever you suggest."

"Are you ready to stop them from harming the camp tonight?"

"We are ready to give our lives. In half an hour, we'll be at the camp to make sure nothing happens."

Thirty minutes later, a large group of young people from the untouchable community had stationed themselves in the road bordering the camp. They carried large bamboo sticks.

Within fifteen minutes, a small group of high caste people approached bearing burning torches, smoking in the night. They shouted and yelled as they approached.

"You didn't vacate. We are going to burn the camp down!"

The untouchables stepped forward, blocking their way. The high castes were shocked to see this large mass of their own workmen.

"What is this? Why are you here?"

"We have come to protect the camp and Sri Chaitanya from danger. If you harm them, we'll burn all your homes to the ground. If you don't care for our happiness, if you can't tolerate the treatment of our children, we'll no longer work for your happiness."

The high castes were nervous and confused. They were greatly outnumbered.

They called to Chaitanya, "Look at the hatred you have brought between our groups."

"Don't think I have brought this hatred. You are treating these workers as enemies. If you don't wish to help them, hatred will result. This situation is abominable. You shouldn't let it continue. You are all children of God. Why should you let the nature of your births divide you. If not for their labor, you couldn't enjoy life in such a fashion. They are your limbs. You are their brain and their stomach. You should enjoy a give-and-take policy. Think of their welfare. Live as a community."

The high castes stamped out their torches. The untouchables lowered their sticks. The camp stayed on for many weeks, serving both castes.

A large cart rolled up to the camp. It was settled at a village near Coimbatore. A great many people surrounded the creaking van. Lying inside, upon a mattress of hay, was a huge man. His eyes rolled up in his head so that he almost appeared to be a corpse. His belly was fully distended, blown up like a giant balloon.

His family members and a group of the *sadhus* removed the man from the cart and, with much difficulty, placed him on the ground. Quickly Chaitanya checked his pulse. It was near non-existent.

"Are there any facts about this man I should know?" he asked the family.

They told him the man had not moved his bowels for five days. Immediately, an enema was prepared.

The water was blocked and unable to enter the man. It splashed down his legs and soaked into the earth.

Chaitanya rolled up his sleeves. Using his hand, he began to withdraw ball after ball of blackened, stone-like faecal matter. After repeating this perhaps twelve times, a great gush of foul-smelling liquid and matter gushed from the patient's body, spraying the entire area, including everyone in the immediate vicinity.

Chaitanya remained by the man's side. Within 45 minutes, his pulse had returned to normal and the man opened his mouth. In a weak voice, he requested a glass of water. He received it along with a strength-building tonic. An hour later, the man was again loaded into the cart and driven home by his jubilant relatives. Chaitanya walked quickly to the well for a long-awaited bath.

In the region of the Himalayas, you very often hear OM chanting. Everything chants OM in the Himalayas. The river says OM. Even the jungle animals roar OM. You can hear the OM sound everywhere. It vibrates every cell of your body. It creates a special rhythm in your system and you are sent into an ecstatic mood.

Rishikesh is located in North India, situated in the foothills of the Central Himalayas, by the source of the sacred Ganges. The river begins high in these mountains and runs thousands of miles down from the glacial snows and lakes, past the dripping forest, through the dust lands to the sea.

Rishikesh is the traditional home of thousands of *swamis* and *sahus*, *rishis* who have, for hundreds and hundreds of years, added to the original store of spiritual vibrations so that here this force is felt as a palpable object, real as the trees and vegetation, the snows on the mountain and the dazzling sunsets.

For many years, Chaitanya had been aware that the Rishikesh was the home of Swami Sivananda Maharaj, the sage of the Himalayas, with whom he had become familiar through the Swami's thousands of devotees and hundreds of books including Bliss Divine, Sure Ways for Success, Sadhana, What Happens to the Soul After Death, Practical Lessons in Yoga, Japa Yoga, Thought Power, his translation of the Gita, etc., etc., etc. In 1919, he decided to leave South India and travel to Sivananda's Divine Life Society.

Internal riots were rapidly spreading throughout India. When he reached Benares, all passages further north were blocked. He returned to Kalahasti and, for a time, studied *Vedanta* under the tutelage of Sri Rajeswaranandaji of Upanishad Vihar.

Until he could continue on to Rishikesh, he often stayed at the Ramana Ashram of Sri Ramana Maharshi in Tiruvannamalai, and visited Sri Aurobindo's Ashram at Pondicherry.

The light is always within you but it is up to you to make use of it. If you close your eyes, even though the light is there, you won't be able to see it. Awake! Arise! Keep the light always in front of you. Follow the light always. If you keep that light constantly in front of you to lead your way, you will always be the Master.

There is a cave in Tiruvannamalai, known as Virupaksha Cave. Chaitanya meditated there. He felt a huge, dark cloud forming within him. Its grey mass expanded outwards, until he was completely surrounded in its smoke. Slowly it settled over his head like a mushroom cloud after an atomic explosion. It raised higher and higher. Higher and higher, until it finally drifted off.

When the denseness passed, a feeling of lightness and joy remained within him. A brilliant light surrounded him like a globe. He bathed in its warmth.

Gradually, it condensed, becoming smaller and smaller, more compact and concentrated. It became a tiny spark and entered into the crown of his head. He fell into a deep trance which lasted two hours. When body consciousness returned, he felt the absence of all unholy, *karmic* vibrations within. A new vibration, filled with light had entered in their place.

YOGIRAJ SWAMI SATCHIDANANDA— EAST

Real happiness is within. If you search for it through worldly or religious ritualistic externals, you will never find it. It is there inside always waiting. There is neither the perceiver nor the perceived. All this is infinite consciousness. The goal of our life is realization of spiritual oneness. Realization of this truth is the birthless and deathless state. There is no birthday or deathday for this consciousness.

In the East, the major forms by which you worship the Lord are divided into six sections. The highest of all is the worship of the guru. It is not because there is a difference between the guru and the other forms of worship that it is the highest, but because it is very difficult to worship the guru. There is ample opportunity to lose faith in him, while there is nothing to make you lose faith in a picture, a form, a statue of a god. When you adore a living person, he is not the same always.

Chaitanya's pilgrimage continued. In the spring of 1949, he was able to continue on his way north to Rishikesh. As he traveled he created a particular image of Swami Sivananda in his mind. He would arrive at the *ashram*, where an official would give him an appointment with the *guru*. Eventually, his turn would come and he would be presented to the great man. Swami Sivananda would be seated in lotus, an austere man with his eyes closed. He would not speak. When he did, the voice would be low, the words mystical and complex. After a few, short, blessed moments with the Swami, he would be dismissed until his next appointment.

It was the summer season and Rishikesh was choked

with pilgrims traveling to and from the shrines of Badrinath and Kedarnath, 160 miles further north. And it seemed most of them stayed for a time, before and after their trip, at Ananda Kutir, Swami Sivananda's *ashram*. Though the *ashram* housed about eighty permanent *ashramites*, three hundred people sat down daily for a free lunch. The entire population of nearby Munikreti took their meals at the *ashram*. There were cows, dogs and hundreds of chattering monkeys fed there. The area teemed under the warm summer light.

Chaitanya arrived at Ananda Kutir at 6 a.m. He was told the *guru* was at his private cottage on a bank of the Ganges. To prepare for the auspicious meeting, Chaitanya scrubbed himself red in a nearby part of the river, washed his traveling clothes and changed into an especially saved, fresh outfit. He bought fruit and flowers to give as offerings and hurriedly went in search of the *guru's* dwelling.

Many steps before he reached the cottage, he heard a loud, booming voice, breaking the stillness of the morning, and deep, hearty laughter. Chaitanya was a bit perplexed. Who would be making so much noise near the Swami's house? He came in view of the cottage. A huge figure was seated comfortably in a cane chair—almost seven feet tall and a good 250 pounds. The man wore a small cloth *dhoti*, fashioned somewhat like a skirt, which came just below his knees. The rest of his body, legs and chest and arms, was bare but for a small towel thrown carelessly about his broad shoulders. The man's legs were crossed loosely at the ankles. A few people were seated at his feet, laughing and listening to his jokes. He smiled and clapped his hands frequently. Chaitanya stared. Immediately, the shadow-Sivananda disappeared from his imagination. He ran straight to the *guru*, placing the offering at his feet. Then he fell straight to his feet as well, staying in that position several minutes without moving. His heart felt full to bursting with joy and love. Slowly, Siva bent down, holding the hands of the new disciple tenderly.

Finally, Chaitanya stood up slowly, gazing at Si-

vananda. In Tamil, the *guru* asked where he had come from.

"South India."

In rapid succession, he inquired when Chaitanya had left his home, how long it had taken him to arrive in Rishikesh, and, "Are you happy?"

"Oh, Swamiji. I am overjoyed to be here."

"Good, good," he clapped his hands. "You have come to the right place. Your troubles are over. Stop wandering and stick to this place. Stay here."

He motioned to one of his attendants. "Bring this man some *idli* and coffee."

"Coffee, Swamiji?" Chaitanya's eyes widened—a *sadhu* drinking coffee!

"Coffee," Sivananda repeated.

"But Swamiji, in all your books you say coffee is bad and now you are . . ."

Sivananda smiled at him. "Do you like coffee?"

"Oh Swamiji, I *love* coffee."

"Do you take hot chutney?"

Chaitanya shook his head no.

"Alright, bring him some *idli* just with *ghee*." Turning back to Chaitanya, he asked, "How do you like the rest of the *ashram*?"

"I was so excited about seeing you, I came directly here without looking at anything else."

"Well then, do you like me. Am I alright?"

Chaitanya had never been asked such a question by a *swami*. "I really don't have the words to express what I feel. I will say, I'm seeing something completely different from what I expected."

"Ah?" Siva raised his eyes. "What *did* you expect?"

"Somehow, I thought you'd be seated on a big, thronelike seat, meditating. I thought it would be very difficult to see you personally . . ." Slowly he wove the image before Sivananda's eyes.

"Ah, and would you like to see me like that? Only then will you think I'm a big *swami*, huh?" Sivananda joked.

After breakfast, he asked one of the *swamis* to give

Chaitanya a room, and told the new *sadhu* to relax. Although the trip had been long and tiring, this order was particularly difficult to follow. All day, Chaitanya waited for the evening *satsang* when he could see his Master again.

It was the *guru's* habit to call upon the new *ashram-ites* and guests during *satsang*, requesting they sing, play an instrument, talk—in some way, show their talents. That evening, he turned his attention toward Chaitanya.

"You are a Tamilian. Why don't you give us a lecture in Tamil?"

Chaitanya became suddenly shy. "Oh no," he looked around, embarrassed. "Swamiji, I'm not prepared to talk."

"Come, come," Sivananda insisted pleasantly. "Tell us something at least."

Chaitanya came forward, hunching himself down so that he would be less conspicuous. Then he spoke. He spoke of how he had long awaited his opportunity, and of his happiness at being here. "We are so fortunate to be at the feet of a Master who is so simple, so friendly, so loving and, at the same time, so filled with wisdom." He ended with a short prayer to the *guru*.

"Wonderful, wonderful," Siva applauded loudly. "We have a great Tamil lecturer with us now."

The lesson of my Gurudev's life was service. Always serve, serve and serve.

Swami Sivananda was born in a small South Indian village, Pathamadar near Tinnaveli, on September 8th. He went to college and became a doctor, working in Malaya for several years. During his medical practice, he never concerned himself about fees or the ability of his patients to pay him. Sometimes, he went from door to door, serving an area's poor. His practice was open all day and night.

Eventually, he traveled to the Himalayas to re-

nounce and become a monk. For several years, he stayed in solitude, meditating, until a time when he decided to start an organization which could serve the needs of large amounts of people. With the help of a few devotees, he began the Divine Life Society. It now has more than 400 international branches.

Swamiji never concerned himself with any single approach toward enlightenment. He knew that every path met at a certain point. He would descend to the level of the individual student, find that person's needs and direct him in light of his own wants.

In private, his students often referred to him as "Givananda," for the open-handed attitude he affected. Whenever guests came to the *ashram*, Sivananda would pile them with free books. Sometimes, a visitor would protest, "Swamiji, I came by plane and can't carry all these books back in my luggage. The airplane company will charge me for them."

"Is that so?" Sivananda would call to an *ashramite*. "Come here. Check out all these books, package them in neat bundles, take them to the post office and send them to this man." He never requested so much as the shipping costs.

The DLS ran an aurvedic pharmacy on the *ashram* grounds which prepared herbal medicines. At times, the devotees were concerned with defraying the high operating costs of the *ashram*. If a guest visited the pharmacy, they would clandestinely ask him if he wanted to buy some tonic. They knew that once the guest saw Sivananda, he would get the preparation for free.

Many times, the *ashram* verged on debt but all the provisions people—the suppliers of food, paper for the presses, building materials—freely gave the DLS supplies if funds weren't available. Often a visitor would write out a 50,000 rupee check covering the outstanding bills.

Every evening, a large group of professional performers showed up at *satsang* to play instruments, sing, dance, act and receive Sivananda's blessings. Even be-

fore such a presentation, he would say, "Bring some hot milk right away. When this man finishes, he'll be tired." Or, "Bring this person all the books I have written about music."

One evening, the son of a well-known flute player arrived for *satsang*. Sivananda found that the son played a bit as well. Immediately, he requested the boy to perform. But the son displayed none of his father's virtuosity. Many listeners covered their ears. As the recital ended, Sivananda applauded heartily.

"Wonderful, wonderful, Mr. Murugesho. I'm giving you the title of *Sankirtan* Yogi."

A devotee whispered, "How can you do that. Such a title will just be meaningless."

The son himself said, "Why are you telling me this, Swamiji. I know I don't play well at all."

"When you do something yourself," Sivananda winked, "you don't always appreciate it as others do."

The following year, the son returned. Those *ashramites* who had been present the previous year prepared to suffer through this concert as well. But it was as if the father were playing, instead of the son. He had become an expert at the instrument.

Ananda Kutir was built on the side of a hill which sloped down to the Ganges. The office, hall, kitchen, hospital, temple and the *guru's* quarters bordered the river. Located 200 yards above, in the upper section, were the dwellings of most of the *ashramites*.

For several months, Chaitanya lived on three cups of milk a day; one for breakfast, lunch and dinner. In the morning, after bathing in the Ganges, he would drink a cup of milk in the kitchen and take another back to his room for lunch, carrying it carefully up the slope. When Sivananda became aware of this practice, he presented Chaitanya with a thermos bottle so that the milk could be kept fresh and warm until lunch.

Every 8th of the month was celebrated as Sivananda's birth. A big feast was prepared. Everyone would

attend and dine with the Master. When Siva saw Chaitanya, he would say, "Today you must sit in front of me. Forget about the milk diet for now," and would proceed to pile the devotee with all types of food from his own plate.

Live for the sake of others. Forget yourself completely. The more you take care of others, the more others will take care of you.

Chaitanya's *ashram* work centered around conducting *hatha* classes and answering correspondence in the Tamil language. Siva would sort the mail, referring certain letters to *ashramites* with the particular knowledge of the subject mentioned. Later, Chaitanya gave *raja yoga* lectures at the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy, attached to Ananda Kutir.

There was a financial crisis at the *ashram*. As no one was restricted from entering and staying there and hundreds were fed for free each day, a noticeable shortage of money resulted. Chaitanya and a group of long-time devotees decided to leave the premises and set an example for the newcomers flooding in.

About three miles from Ananda Kutir was a forest area, in which a wealthy man had set up a free shelter for *sadhus*. It consisted of seven small huts, each concealed by location and the heavy green vegetation of the jungle. At night, wild animals roamed the area, treading softly through the bushes. The center of the area was a tiny vegetable garden and a free feeding station managed by a caretaker. Every noon, he prepared a meal of *roti*, a bread, and *dal* for the seven men under his charge. Chaitanya learned that one of the huts was unoccupied and available for his use. He was instructed to bring with him a small towel to carry the *rotis* and a bowl for *dal*.

When he arrived, the caretaker ushered him to the empty hut and cleaned it thoroughly. It was evening and within half an hour, he returned to the hut with a portable charcoal stove and a bag of provisions.

"What is this for?" Chaitanya asked.

"I'm going to make you some *rhotis*."

"I thought there was only a meal served at noon."

"Well, you just came tonight. You must be hungry." The caretaker sat down and went about making the bread. He joined the new *sadhu* for dinner.

The caretaker watched over Chaitanya like a mother hen. He never allowed him to go to the station for food. Each morning and evening, he would send over a cup of milk and at noon, the usual meal.

"Why do you do this just for me?" Chaitanya asked, perplexed.

"Somehow I am drawn to you. I feel like doing it. Please let me."

Chaitanya returned to Ananda Kutir to prepare for his *sannyas* initiation—July 10, 1949.

When you ask for the Highest, you get everything.

Brahma, the creator, brought forth four mental sons, the Kumaras, to help him with his work of creation. Because of their absolute non-attachment and spirit of renunciation, the Kumaras refused, in order to lead a life of meditation, and were initiated by Lord Siva, in the form of Dakshinamurti. These four were the first *sannyasins*, renunciates. Following them on their path of total renunciation—non-identification with the sufferings of the body and mind, realization of the true self—were hundreds, thousands of others . . . Vyasa, writer of the Mahabharata which includes the Bhagavad-Gita; Sri Sankara, religious and philosophical giant; Saint Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and Sivananda.

The day before initiation, every devotee fasts and spends the hours meditating and repeating the Gayatri

Mantra. Final offerings are made to all souls, living and departed, in the form of balls of food. Thus, the devotee finishes off all obligations to humanity. He offers the last ball to himself, as if he were a dead person.

As in *brahmacharya diksha*, the initiate thoroughly shaves his head and face, except for the topmost tuft of hair. This time, Chaitanya didn't worry about becoming ill. The Rishikesh climate was a good deal cooler than South India's.

"Are you ready to take *sannyas*?" Siva asked.

"Yes, Swamiji. I'm looking forward to it."

Sivananda inspected his disciple closely. "You look so beautiful with your long hair and beard. Are you ready to renounce those also?"

In the Tamil language, *uyir*, is life; *mayr* is hair.

"Swamiji, in *sannyas* we are supposed to renounce everything. When a disciple isn't even ready to give his *mayr* to the Master, how can he pledge his *uyir*?"

Siva called to everyone, laughing, "You see everyone, not only is he ready to give me his life, he's ready to give me his hair also. That's really wonderful!"

The day of *sannyas* was clear and warm. The Ganges sparkled with reflections. Chaitanya presented himself before Sivananda with his freshly shaved face and head. The Master looked at him silently.

Into the orange flames of the sacrificial fire are offered the body, mind and intellect of the initiate, as well as his white garments. In the river, the Sannyas Mantra is repeated for the first time, renouncing everything. The devotee dips into the water three times and walks to the shore where his *guru* awaits him. Quickly, the Master removes his final tuft of hair. He cuts off the sacred thread. The initiate offers even his underwear to the river and, completely naked, accepts the *gerua* cloth from the Master. Its color is orange as if come directly out of the sacrificial flames. Now the body, the mind, even the dress all belong to the Master. He is given a new name, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, Swami Satchidananda.

Along with Satchidananda, Chidananda (Knowledge-Bliss Absolute), Maunananda (Bliss of Silence) and Brahmananda (Bliss of Brahma) were also initiated.

The following morning, business as usual, Satchidananda waited in his *guru's* office to receive the daily load of correspondence. Sivananda came in, eyeing his new *swami* curiously.

"Satchidanandaji," he said thoughtfully. "I'm giving you special permission to grow your hair again. You looked beautiful that way. I want you to look like that again."

He has not cut it since.

My highest experience, which was not connected with any particular form, was the experience of *Adwaita* or Oneness or Enlightenment. I had that in 1949, a few months after my *sannyas* initiation. It was in mid-Winter, when I visited Vasishta Cave. Vasishta was a great *rishi*, a sage who lived hundreds of years ago. There is a legend that it was in this cave he performed his austerities.

I went into the cave, bending down until, after 25 feet, I reached a large room-like place with a seat. As I sat there and meditated, I had the experience of transcending my body and mind, realizing myself as the Omnipresent. I forgot my individuality. It is impossible to explain exactly what this is.

I must have spent several hours in that state. Then I heard a humming sound, OM chanting, coming from a long distance away. Slowly, slowly, it became louder. As it neared, I became aware of my mind and body. I stood up and went out of the cave.

For some time, I couldn't see anything in the normal way. All over I saw light, light, light. The whole world appeared to be a mass of light. There was only peace and peace everywhere. The state persisted that whole day.

Of course, after that, I had this experience very often,

mostly when I visited a holy place. I had it in Badrinath and almost every day when I went to Mt. Kailash. I had it in Amarnath in Kashmir. Even in Ceylon, whenever I visited Adam's Peak. I had it in Jerusalem and at St. Peter's in the Vatican."

Yoga is neither for the person who eats too much, nor for him who starves. Neither for the person who sleeps constantly or for one who doesn't sleep. Neither for the man who talks too much, nor for one who stops completely. The middle path is yoga.

As usual, the *ashramites* were gathered for evening *satsang*. It was summer and the session was held in the cool night air on a terrace adjoining the dining hall.

As the group chanted, they could see the huge form of Gurudev, making its way from his *kutir* along with a number of other *swamis*. All carried bulging bags. It was the *guru's* custom to bring a little *prasad* to pass around at the end of the *satsang*, generally small pastries or cashew nuts. That evening, he also carried a glass container—something special.

He called first to Mounananda, the former editor of Mahatma Gandhi's "Harijan."

"Mounanandaji. Come here. I have something for you. You will love it." He handed the devotee a small green-colored ball. Mounananda placed it in his mouth and smiled. He swallowed it, licking his lips.

"Yogiraj," he motioned to Satchidananda. "Come here. Come on. I'm going to give you something delicious." He smiled at the disciple lovingly.

"Shut your eyes and stretch out your hand."

Into the extended palm, he placed a small, soft ball. Satchidananda assumed it was the same delicacy his brother-monk had received before him.

Siva instructed, "Without looking, put it into your mouth. It's a nice surprise."

Returning his *guru's* smile, Satchidananda screwed his eyes shut and popped the ball into his mouth.

FIRE! His whole body was burning. It was like a

zap of electricity through his body—seeking out each limb, each cell, hair follicle. The ball of green chili made its way down his esophagus, tracing a rut of heat. The disciple leaped high into the air. Tears began to roll involuntarily from his eyes.

The *guru* exploded with laughter. He doubled his body and held his stomach. Great gushes of mirth rolled from his eyes.

“Look at the Yogiraj,” he gasped. “See the yogi. A little chili made him completely upset.” He began to shake with laughter again. “Equanimity is yoga. Above dualities is yoga. Above heat and cold, sweet and sour.” At last his chuckles quieted down and drifted off into the air over the river.

“You should not always take sweet things or live on just milk alone. Occasionally, you should take hot things also. Suppose you go into the world to teach and someone feeds you hot curry. If you show such a reaction, how will your host feel? He’ll really feel terrible. You should always be able to tolerate anything and everything. Don’t stick to one diet always. Learn to digest different things just to see how you’ll react.”

Satchidananda had calmed down. “Thank you, Swamiji. I can assure you this is one lesson I’ll never forget.”

Always try to serve others. Don’t even call it helping, call it service because you are benefitted by that. If a man begs from you and you give him something, you shouldn’t think you are helping him. Instead, he is helping you. Hasn’t he given you an opportunity to express your generosity? If not for him, you couldn’t become a big donor. If no one is there to receive, how could you donate?

Satchidananda returned to the forest for meditation until a special request from his *guru* brought him back to Ananda Kutir.

A wealthy devotee from Madras had arrived at the

ashram with his son and was asking especially for Swami Satchidananda. When he found that the Swami was living in the forest, he prepared to go there at once to stay with him.

"No, no," Siva said. "You can't live in the jungle with him. You won't be comfortable. Instead, let him come here and stay with you."

The man was quite old with a rheumatic condition. Quarters were set up for him near the river and an adjoining room was prepared for Satchidananda. The man remained unsatisfied. He insisted Satchidananda stay in his room with him.

As Swamiji slept nearby, the man broke his hip while getting out of bed in the middle of the night. For a while, he was nursed at the *ashram* but soon insisted he had to return home. Swamiji traveled 150 miles to Delhi and back, arranging for the man's plane flight. The man told him, "I can't trust my son to take care of me. You'll have to accompany me to Madras and then return here."

Though this would mean a great delay in his return to solitude and study, Satchidananda agreed.

Back in Madras, the man begged the Swamiji to remain "just a few more days." Satchidananda agreed, arranging his life accordingly.

He nursed the man 24 hours a day. Many nights, just as he closed his eyes, the man would ask, "Swamiji, are you asleep yet?"

It was the understanding of Swamiji that kept him from becoming annoyed with this task. It was a chance for him to serve and he recognized the love the man had for him. He remained while the weeks stretched into a month. The cast was taken off and the man was able to walk with a cane.

"I've taken so much of your time," he apologized. "Please forgive me. Even though I'd love to have you stay here, I know it is time for you to go back to Rishikesh."

Satchidananda bowed to him, thanked him, and returned north.

Sri Velammai developed a minor oral infection. A doctor treated it with an extremely potent medicine which caused her mouth to become badly inflamed, she could barely close it. It became near impossible to eat or drink. The family grew concerned. They couldn't call in the doctor. After all, he had caused the swelling in the first place. Velammai calmed their fears, "Don't worry. Soon I'll receive something from my son and then everything will be alright."

After two days she received a letter from Rishikesh, 200 miles away. Inside the message was a small quantity of holy ash with instructions for her to swallow some and put the rest on her forehead. Minutes after the ash was applied, the inflammation disappeared and Velammai could close her mouth normally.

Satchidananda received a letter from Sri Kalyanasunderam.

"How did you know of her ailment? Now she is fine."

It was the first time he learned of his mother's illness.

Treat everyone as the Lord. Feel His presence in everyone. If you see the entire Universe as a divine representation, you will start going out and serving everyone.

On Sivananda's behalf, Satchidananda undertook a tour of India. He left Ananda Kutir on February 8, 1951.

The *guru* watched over him with concern prior to the departure. Mainly, he was disturbed about Satchidananda's limited diet of milk and fruit.

"Take good care of your health. A fruit and milk diet alone will not suit work of an intense nature."

At the farewell meal, Sivananda sat across from his disciple, making sure Satchidananda got used to a heavier diet, including hot spices.

"Jai, Satchidananda! Go and thrill the hearts of thou-

sands. Inspire all, especially students, to take to the path of yoga and lead the Divine Life."

The devotee prostrated, holding onto his *guru's* feet and left to catch his train.

New Delhi . . . Madras . . . Bangalore . . . down through India to Coimbatore. He lectured at colleges, universities and the homes of devotees. He gave private and public instruction in *hatha* exercises and *pranayama*. New branches of DLS were opened in the Nandi Hills Station, Mysore; Kumbakonam and Coimbatore. In Bombay, he lectured and demonstrated all over—Sankara Mutt, Asthika Samaj, Sri Ramananda Satchidananda Samaj, Chaitanya Prabha Mandali, Bharat Vidhya Bhavan, the South Indian Educational Society and High School, the Naval Accounts Office.

On September 8th, he interrupted his tour for a special celebration of Gurudev's birthday in Kirkee.

Back to Bombay for programs at Poddar High School, the Gujarat Hindu Shri Mandali, All-India Women's Conference at Santa Cruz, Sports Club of the Imperial Chemical Industries.

He was consulted on medical problems and prescribed various yogic and naturopathic treatments, learned during his time with Sri Bikku Swamigal.

Eight months later, October 10th, he returned to Sivananda for a brief visit.

"Satchidananda, you have worked wonders. You have thrilled one and all. I have received several letters and reports of admiration from various people. You have created a mighty spiritual stir in the country. You have, by God's grace, rendered an inestimable Divine service to the Lord's children."

Barabanki—Satchidananda stayed there, training college students in *asanas*. On the evening of December 31, he left Barabanki and continued his tour by train. A man from Lucknow was seated in his compartment.

The train passed through the cool night. Lights flickered on in the hills. The man began to speak to the Swami, questioning him about the spirit, the mind, various facets of yoga.

Swamiji left the train at Lucknow, joining his new friend. A number of people were called to the man's house that New Year's Eve to listen to an impromptu lecture. Swamiji spoke on *raja* yoga, the royal path.

The morning of the New Year, his host greeted him. "Swamiji, I wish to take the vow of *brahmacharya*, celibacy. I would also like to give up smoking. Help me with your strength so that I can stick to these things."

Satchidananda blessed his new disciple. He passed on to him a bit of Gurudev's energy and waved goodbye to the crowd at the Lucknow Station.

There was a break in his schedule. Satchidananda took this opportunity to re-charge himself. Leaving the train at Nasik, he wandered alone for several days, free as a mendicant *sadhu*. After several days, he went to Bombay to finish the tour.

Bombay was steaming and crowded with people. His visit started with a nine day celebration at Ramana Satchidananda Samaj. He lectured on Ramana Maharshi's inquiry, "Who am I?," and led chanting.

A year and nine days after its start, he ended the tour on February 17, 1919.

Real service to humanity is service to the Lord. Don't differentiate from person to person—whether it be God or dog. Treat all the same, as God.

A mother and her daughter walked slowly down the path leading to the Ganges. They were devotees of Gurudev from Ceylon.

Coming down the slope behind them were Satchi-

dananda and a group of monks. Siva followed them leisurely.

A piercing, shrill cry. In slow motion, the daughter fell to the ground, the mother bending over her. Nearby lay a dead scorpion.

The monks quickly decided to send one of their number for a chair in which to carry the child to the hospital. But as one of them started up the hill, Satchidananda dashed down, scooped up the child and ran to the hospital in time to neutralize the effects of the poison.

Some of the monks gossiped amongst themselves. "Was it right for a *sannyasi* to physically carry a young girl?"

Satchidananda ignored such discussions. To him the question wasn't one of gender but of life or death. Sivananda watched, refusing to comment.

At the stop in Vilupuram, Satchidananda entered the railcar to find one half completely vacant but for two people. The other half was completely filled, men and women nudged into one another, babies crammed on their mothers' laps.

He thought, "Well, there doesn't seem to be any reason for half of the compartment to be so empty. But now I can stretch myself out."

"Swami, Swami," a murmur from the crowded side. "Please come over here."

"Why?"

The people didn't answer. They turned their heads and began to whisper amongst themselves.

One of the two men on his side of the compartment answered Satchidananda. The man seemed to be quite wealthy, expensively dressed and be-jeweled. Slowly he said, "I too would like you to sit on the other side because, you see, I'm a leper."

With such an answer, Swamiji didn't want to abruptly get up and leave. "It's alright. I can sit here. Nothing will happen to me."

The man smiled and relaxed. Within ten minutes, he started talking to the swami. He spoke of the many years he had suffered from the disease and of the many emotional disturbances his condition had created.

Swamiji patiently explained to him the technical reasons for such a disease, the way in which their progress could be stopped and ultimately cured.

"For one thing," he said, "cigarette smoking will aggravate leprosy."

The man admitted not only was he a heavy smoker, but he took snuff and chewed tobacco as well.

"Why don't you give them up? At least in this stage. The nicotine will only disturb your bloodstream and increase your pain."

The leper inhaled noisily. Slowly, he began to show the Swami the waste created by his disease. He pushed up the long sleeves of his shirt. Almost all his fingers were in a state of decay. With one hand, he pushed a richly embossed gold snuff-box from his pocket. It was studded with jewels. The sparkling rubies and diamonds contrasted grotesquely with his maimed fingers.

"With your blessings, Swamiji, I'm going to put an end to this. I'll never touch snuff again." He carefully maneuvered the box into his right hand and threw it from the window of the speeding train. It bounced on an embankment and disappeared.

From another pocket, he withdrew a matching cigarette box and, while everyone in the car watched in amazement, threw that outside also.

"I'll never smoke again, chew tobacco or take snuff." The leper seemed very content. It was time for him to leave the train. At the next station, his attendant reminded him of this. But the man had changed his mind. He had decided not to leave the train just yet.

"I'm going to stay on as long as the Swami does. When he gets off, I'll catch a return train and come back."

"Why?" Swamiji asked. "What's the point? I've told you all I know. You needn't continue your journey just to keep me company."

"Well, Swamiji. It's not just by talking to you I'm receiving benefit, although you've given me some wonderful instructions. But before you sat down near me, I was continually scratching my hands, rubbing them constantly to rid myself of their itching. When you came, gradually the itching went away, and since we've been talking together, I'm completely free of it. For the first time in months I feel comfortable. Please let me keep this comfort until you finish your train ride."

Let the Lord in you be the charioteer. Let Him guide. You just follow.

Selvanayagi came from a very wealthy Ceylonese family, which owned many acres of land around Trincomalee. When Sivananda traveled to Ceylon on his all India-Ceylon tour, she met him, became very interested in his teachings and eventually came to Ananda Kutir to study under him. Among yoga *sannyas* there are no sexual differentiations. So after many years she too was initiated and given the name Swami Satchidananda.

She came from a Tamil community in Ceylon and, because they spoke the same language, the two Satchidanandas often sat and talked.

In 1952, she decided that a branch of DLS must be started in her home country. She brought the idea to Gurudev and requested that the other Swami Satchidananda accompany her to Ceylon and start the organization.

This was the last thing Satchidananda desired at the time. He wanted to continue his seclusion and meditation. The other Satchidananda knew of his reluctance, but had decided upon him for his manner of teaching, as well as the fact that he spoke the Tamil language so well.

Sivananda approached his disciple with her request.

"Gurudev," Swamiji said. "I am not fit to do such work. There may be other devotees who would like to go to Ceylon. I'll be content to stay here and do my

work." He thought his refusal would end the matter.

Sivananda had other plans. "Go ahead. I will work through you. Don't worry."

Satchidananda tried another approach. "Gurudev, you are sending me to Ceylon. We are both called Swami Satchidananda. How will people differentiate between us? There will be confusion. What will happen when letters come?"

Siva laughed. "From now on, she will be known as Swami Satchidananda Mataji and you can use the title of Yogiraj I gave you—Yogiraj Swami Satchidananda."

The matter was settled.

At the close of 1952, Swamiji and Mataji left their Master in Rishikesh and traveled down to Bombay, attending the birthday celebration of Ramana Maharshi. Then to South India, arriving in Trincomalee on February 1, 1953.

In the spiritual life, all paths lead to the same place.

The two *swamis* met early in the morning and visited all the fields owned by Mataji's family. Ten acres were selected near Trincomalee. With the help of local devotees, land was cleared and an *ashram* built—a main hall for lectures and classes, a small house for Mataji and another for Swamiji. Construction was completed in September '53.

While the *ashram* was being built, Swamiji lived in a nearby boarding house. He held talks and gave *asana* classes at the Hindu College, run by the Ramakrishna Mission.

"You say you are from the Divine Life Society. How come you are giving classes and talking at the Ramakrishna Mission school?"

"What is the difference? The Ramakrishna Mission also is Divine Life. Every spiritual institution is a Divine Life institution. They have different names but there is no real difference."

Guru Poornima Day is held in the month of July. It is a day set aside for meditation on the *guru* and lectures on his life. A week before, the Ceylon Divine Life devotees began collecting pictures of Swami Sivananda, polishing frames and setting them up around the *ashram*.

Swamiji thought about this for a while, then told the disciples, "There are people from all different religions coming to me. I have invited them all to this celebration. If they are greeted with these pictures of Gurudev, they might feel that their own teachers have been left out. After all, this is supposed to be a day for thought on the *guru* and there are many, many *gurus*."

So the devotees set about collecting pictures of masters from all religions. They covered the walls with pictures of Christ, Buddha, Mohammed, Sri Aurobindo, Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Maharshi, as well as a few of Gurudev.

The day was proclaimed "All Prophets' Day" and became an annual event where the various heads of Ceylon's religious factions could come together and discourse on the truths behind the particular religions.

As the chairman, Swamiji summarized, "Truth is One; paths are many."

Ceylon's Minister of Post and Railways officially opened the new *ashram* on November 7, 1919. Soon after, construction was started on an orphanage and free medical dispensary. The center also started a cottage industries section where jobless girls were given jobs doing hand weaving. About 45 unemployed girls came to the *ashram* from a number of different communities. They were Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Swamiji often looked in on their workshop to see how things were progressing.

"Many times, when I ask one of you the name of another girl, you say 'Oh, she is a Buddhist girl,' 'She is a Hindu girl.' Wouldn't it be nicer if you said, 'She is my sister.' At least, while you are here, feel you are all living together as one family. Try to feel that oneness."

The girls pulled together as a family. Their work became more efficient. "Why don't you start the day with a prayer. You all believe in God. Probably if you start and finish the day with a prayer, your yarn will not break in the middle. You'll be able to produce even more, and earn better wages."

"But our religions are different. Whose prayer should we use?"

"We need not try to find a common prayer. Each day, a different girl will say her prayer and the rest of us will join in. That way, you'll be learning different prayers as well. As each of you repeats the prayers of the others, you'll become even closer."

And that's exactly what happened.

In the day-to-day life, try to detach yourself from things. It is not running away. But only a detached person can perform his duties well. With attachment, you will not be able to do even that which you are normally able to do.

The orphanage housed a number of young boys and girls. Mataji had a particular favorite, a young boy, very intelligent and much loved by everyone. Many times he would choose to play near the well.

The well was made up of a brown stone wall. Planted to one side of the wall were two poles standing parallel, 12 feet tall. These were connected by a crossbar. Balancing on the crossbar was another long pole. On one end of it was a weight. On the other, a string connected to a large wooden bucket. By pulling on the string, the bucket could be raised and lowered. When not in use, the weight was tied to the ground.

The boy had a habit of clambering onto the top of the wall, climbing into the bucket and swinging it back and forth over the yawning hole. Usually, the tied weight kept the bucket from falling into the well. Whenever Mataji or Swami caught him playing this way, they scolded him, telling him it was dangerous.

"The next time," they said, "we catch you playing in the bucket, you'll be punished."

One morning he was missing. His older sister called out the whole *ashram* to look for him. She ran straight to the well and saw the frayed rope. Looking down into the darkness, she could just make out the top of his head—a small round, black shape—coming to the surface and disappearing again. When the rest of the *ashramites* answered her screams, there was nothing to be seen but a layer of white bubbles on the water's surface.

Swamiji placed a long ladder into the well and raced down the steps. At the line of white foam, he dived fifteen feet to the floor of the well. The boy lay small and limp on the bottom. The *swami* carried the dead child to the surface and up the ladder. On the ground, he looked even smaller.

A prayer was conducted before carrying him back to the orphanage.

Almost every Sunday, Swamiji joined a group of friends and teachers from the Hindu College for an excursion to the sea. Some distance from the shore, an anchored raft floated over the waves. Swamiji was a strong swimmer. He and two others easily swam out to the raft and clambered aboard, lying to dry in the hot sun.

Another teacher wanted to join them, although he was a fairly weak swimmer. He misjudged the distance to the float and began to flounder about fifteen feet away. Swamiji dived from the raft and caught hold of the gasping, struggling man. The waves were too high for him to reach the raft again, so he struck off for the shore.

The man gradually revived with artificial respiration.

Many people who have felt the misery of the normal world come to yoga. We don't force yoga onto any-

body. Only when these people want some sort of solution to their unhappiness, do we offer them yoga.

When Miss R.'s relationship with her boyfriend came to an end, she became increasingly depressed and unhappy. At these times, she visited Swamiji for advice.

"I don't want to live anymore. I want to commit suicide," she told him.

Swamiji listed her alternatives, advising her on the ways in which she could carry on her life. "Any time you feel like killing yourself, you must promise to come to me before doing it. You can only do it after receiving my permission."

She agreed at the time but a few weeks later her despondency reached a peak and she bought a bottle of liquid rat poison.

At 10:30 in the morning, she closed the door to her room, opened the bottle and prepared to drink the poison. At exactly this time, Swamiji was driving past her house and decided to pay her a surprise visit. He entered the drawing room and asked the servant for Miss R.

The girl walked to the closed bedroom door and tapped on it. "Swamiji is here. He wants to see you."

Miss R. sat very still on her bed. A feeling of fright and extreme embarrassment rose within her. She felt feverish. Quickly, she opened her window and threw the bottle into the bushes. "Is he really here? Tell him I'm coming."

It took a number of minutes to pull herself together. "What would he think . . . I gave him my promise."

As the time passed, Swamiji decided to continue on his way. "This was only a casual call," he told the servant. "Tell her I'll see her later on."

When Miss R. finally entered the room, her *guru* was gone. A few hours later, she went to the *ashram* and confessed what had happened.

"Swamiji, you really saved my life. I'll never try that again."

Soon after she married.

The two sides are positive and negative, light and shade. Evil also is God. If you say evil is not God, then who created evil? There is only one God and he allows these things to happen—good and the absence of good. Evil is only the absence of good. At those times, goodness is temporarily hidden just like at night when the sun is temporarily hidden. So the light is always there, but sometimes it gets hidden for a while.

Swamiji sat on the verandah of his cottage, watching a young man approach. The man was running and his face showed strain and anxiety. As he reached the *guru*, he prostrated full length and began to cry as he held Swamiji's feet.

"Swamiji, I am a terrible sinner. I have sinned against you. Please help me. Pardon me."

The Swami lifted the man up and sat him by his side. "What do you mean?" he asked gently. "How could you have sinned against me? This is the first time I've seen you here. I don't even know your name."

"Well, you may not know why or how, but I'll tell you. My younger brother comes to you often. He is a very good devotee. But since the very beginning of your arrival here, I hated you . . . not really as an individual, but I hated your principles. I belonged to a group which doesn't believe in God and particularly not in all those religious rituals. I was its secretary and one of the group's guiding members. We didn't like your staying here in Trincomalee, the way you converted people and took them into the religious fold. We decided to dispose of you—either by frightening you and driving you away—or even by murdering you."

"Well, all this is news to me. I never knew anything about it. When did you try these things?"

He asked the Swami to recollect a few incidents. About three weeks after arriving in Trincomalee, Swamiji was invited to give a lecture on Maha Sivaratri Day. It was held in February in a temple to Siva constructed on a rock which rested atop a small hill.

"Do you remember a group of young men sitting right in front of you? We were with an elderly man. All during your lecture, we cut jokes and tried to create a disturbance."

"I do remember . . . but nothing serious happened. Nobody frightened me."

"The elderly man was the president of our group's branch in another town. We had asked him to come with us in order to ask you confusing questions which would bother you. But somehow, he remained sitting quietly throughout the lecture without saying anything. We too failed at creating the desired confusion. After the talk, we asked him why he hadn't done his job. He told us, 'I had planned to do it but became spell-bound listening to the Swami. His thoughts made good sense to me.' That was our first failure.

"Our second try was at a neighboring village, where you went to give an address during a temple festival. We sent in a drunkard with a large dog. He reeled through the crowds, scaring people. He was even supposed to set the dog loose on you. Everyone seemed upset by him but you. At one point, he asked you a question which you answered quite coolly. That seemed to calm him down. Soon after, he left the grounds for good.

"The third time was one evening when you were returning from that same village late at night after a lecture. There is a part of the road that passes through dense jungle. We arranged for a group of people to block your car, pull you out and beat you up. They tied a thick rope across the road, between two trees. We had counted on the fact that there is very little traffic on that road at night. We knew your car and what time you'd be passing. Just as we expected you, another car came down the road. The men had to remove the barricade to let it through. They didn't see that your car was directly behind this one. When the first car passed through, you followed directly behind and passed off safely."

"Well," Swamiji assured him. "It's alright. You

shouldn't be so upset. After all, nothing happened to me. But why didn't you continue?"

"I couldn't do it anymore. The whole business began to make me sick. Every night I would have horrible dreams. I became frightened of the mysterious power in you which caused our failures. Slowly, some of my close members left and became your devotees. I became certain something terrible would happen to me. Now I almost feel as if I am going mad. I come to you as a devotee. Please help me. I'll do anything you desire. If you want, I'll set fire to my old office and dispose of it once and for all. I'll get rid of all those people still working against you. I'll . . ."

"There's no need to do those things. You were the foremost member of that group. When your mind began to change, you became a good man. The same thing can happen to those people also. Let them see a change for the better in you. Then they'll also be changed. Pray for their good. Once you confess, everything is pardoned. Don't bother about the past. Think of the future. Come here often and use your energy to help me with my work."

Let us not think we can learn things only through the intellect. You can read things in a book, but a book can never teach you.

Swamiji was invited to lecture in the capital of Colombo. The editor of *Sudhanthiran*, a Tamil weekly newspaper, prepared to interview him. Mr. Sivanayagam was a hero to thousands of Ceylon's youths because of his intellectual and basically atheistic viewpoint. He was a well-read, influential man and though not truly an atheist was dead against religious ritual of any kind.

At the interview, the editor represented himself simply as a reporter. He devised a number of intricate questions through which he hoped to confound the Swami and put him in a bad light with the readers.

But, to his amazement, Swamiji deftly fielded each question, replying with concise and logical answers.

Sivanayagam became a close devotee. He published the Swami's answers in his newspaper, alongside the appropriate questions.

"To answer our intricate questions in the proper philosophical way and with common sense, we have a great *swami* now in Trincomalee—the Swami Satchidananda."

The response of the young readers was overwhelming. They sent questions and requested replies. A regular column, "Way to Peace," was put into the paper.

Now Mr. Sivanayagam is in charge of a number of Ceylonese newspapers and continues to give running reports of Swamiji and his work.

In Trincomalee, a group was formed to open all Hindu temples to the untouchables. Swamiji was a member of that committee, which also included the Chairman of the Urban Council of Trincomalee and a member of Parliament.

They organized a large group of untouchables which went from temple to temple, chanting and repeating their demands. From that day on, the temples of Ceylon were open and all were permitted to enter and worship.

We can never see one big mass, all enlightened. When that happens there is no world. Its purpose is over. The world's purpose is to shape people. More and more people come in and the world shapes them, reforming their minds. It's like a factory.

A Colombo branch of the Divine Life Society was inaugurated. Then a Jaffna branch. Each month, Swamiji made regular visits to the tea plantations to hold discussions and prayer meetings with the workers. His

main theme during these talks was an attempt to get the laborers to educate, at least, their children, to turn away from chronic drinking and the enormous wastage of their limited funds.

He ended each talk in evangelical style. "Is there anyone who disagrees with my point of view that drinking is an evil habit?"

No answer.

"If you accept that it brings evil effects—sickness, quarrels, wastage of money—how many of you are ready to stop that habit from this day on? Any person who is that courageous should come forward and take a public vow to stop drinking from today onward. This is the real reward you can give me."

Complete hush. Each man examined his neighbor's face to see what *he* would do.

Cautiously, one man came forward. In a low voice, he said, "I realize the evil effects through Swamiji's talk. I am really thankful for it. From today on I promise not to touch a drink."

Swamiji lifted the man's arm like a referee with a boxing champ. "Here is a courageous man. Give him a hand."

Thunderous applause.

"Let us pray for this man so that he will stick to this vow throughout his entire life."

After the silence. "Is there anyone else?"

A trickle of men hesitantly stepped forward. There were a few times when more than 150 would come up and take the vow.

After a lapse of a year, he returned to a particular plantation. As he ended his talk, a well-dressed man came to the platform carrying a large, multi-colored garland. He turned to Swamiji. "I garland the Swami and would also like to offer him this ring from my finger." He slipped off a shiny gold band. "Because of Swamiji's last visit, I took a vow never to drink again. From then on, I found it very easy to save money. I

bought all the ornaments my wife now wears . . . her silk *sari* . . . all my clothing. My child is being educated in a good way. If you all follow my lead, you can have these things too."

Swamiji smiled broadly and returned the ring. "Although I am very grateful, *swamis* don't usually wear rings. Take it back and save it for your son. God bless you. Stick to your new life and set examples to many more."

A large segment of Ceylon's poor worked on these plantations. Their single or double-room huts stood in long, straight rows of tin sheet. The women ambled in and out of the huts, cooking, doing laundry, tending of the crowds of young children who played in the dirt.

Whenever Swamiji stayed overnight, he visited the workers in their dwellings before leaving the following morning.

One time he entered the main room of a small hut. Its walls were a collage of color-framed pictures hung on nails, everywhere, covering every wall—Lord Ganesh, Subramanya, Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru were interspersed with full-length technicolor portraits of various movie starlets.

Satchidananda pointed to the elephant features of Ganesh. He turned to his thin, brown host who stood next to his young wife.

"Do you worship this picture with incense and camphor?"

The man blushed with pride. "Yes Swamiji, I do that."

"And to this?" The teacher indicated Lord Subramanya.

Again, "Yes."

"Do you offer that same kind of worship to this one also?" Casually he gestured to one of the movie stars.

The man watched his toes. "No Swamiji," he whispered.

"Who is this?" the *guru* teased. "Parashakti?"

The man could barely be heard, "No Swamiji, it's just a photo."

"Ah yes. I see. But who is it?"

The wife answered, "Swamiji, it is just a picture of a cinema star."

Satchidananda looked from the man to his wife, smiling. He said, "When you have such a beautiful wife, who is really a goddess, why should you have to look at imitations like this?"

The laborer followed Swamiji's gaze from picture to wife. "Yes," he agreed. "I can see that." He took them down and put up other ones of the gods.

My guru was a saint. He never denied anybody anything.

During Satchidananda's All-India Tour, a young graduate in Bombay had become very attached to him. The man decided to leave his job and follow the Swami back to Rishikesh. At that time, he was employed by a military concern. Swamiji knew the boy would have a great deal of difficulty if he left this job without giving notice and suggested he come to the Himalayas only after finishing up his work.

By the time Mr. Sreenivasan arrived at Ananda Kutir, Swamiji had already left for Ceylon. He wrote to him for instructions and was told to stay on at Ananda Kutir and eventually, if he wished, take *sannyas diksha* from Swami Sivananda.

After some time, Gurudev Sivananda noted that Sreenivasan was indeed good *sannyas* material. He asked the man if he wished to take initiation.

"Swamiji, I would love to, but I would like to get it from Swami Satchidananda."

Instead of answering, "If Satchidananda is your *guru*, then I am your grand-*guru* and well ready to give you *sannyas*," the Master told him, "What are you going to do then? Would you like to wait until he visits here

or would you rather get his permission to take *sannyas* from me on his behalf?"

"Yes, Swamiji. I will write to Swami Satchidanandaji and get his permission."

Sreenivasan wrote to Ceylon.

Immediately, Satchidananda wrote to his disciple: "Don't wait for me. Take initiation from Swami Sivanandaji."

Sreenivasan accepted his advice but told Gurudev at the time of initiation, "I am seeing Swami Satchidanandaji in you—not Sivanandaji—please give me this *sannyas* as Swami Satchidananda."

Siva just smiled and complied.

Meat has more toxins than vegetables. It contains purine and purine gives rise to cholesterol, and that is merely physical. On the mental side also, food reacts and brings in qualities. To see the difference between meat eaters and vegetarians, go to any zoo. See the animals who live on meat. Most of the carnivores must be caged and even in the cage they don't feel well-protected, they become restless, they roam around. But look at the herbivorous animals—cows, goats, horses, elephants. With what innocence they look at you. They are so passive. And it is not that they are weak, they are strong but their strength is a passive strength. The tiger can kill the elephant, it has a killing strength, but it can't pull the great weights that can be pulled by the elephant. We want that pulling strength, that *sattwic* strength.

The University of Ceylon in Perudania is located near Kandy. Shortly after the swami's arrival in Ceylon, he accepted an invitation to hold a discussion with the students there.

As he entered the hall, a great buzz began. Many of the students had never seen such a man before—orange gown, shoulder length hair, a long beard. He was in-

roduced by the presiding education officer, Mr. Somasegaram, and proceeded to give a half-hour introductory speech, after which he opened the floor for questions.

Immediately, a very dapper-looking student—European clothes, short, slicked back hair, pointed shoes—stood up, raising his hand.

In an eloquent tone, he began, "May I ask you a question?"

"Sure. Go ahead."

"I hope you won't be upset by it."

"There's no need for me to get upset. Ask your question."

He cleared his throat loudly. "Swamiji, you know the cow eats grass." Effective pause.

"I know and so does everyone else."

"Then I eat the flesh of the cow. Logically, why can't I say I too am eating grass."

The hall shook with applause.

"Logically, you are right. If he eats grass and you eat him, then you are eating grass."

The students looked approvingly at their fellow debater who smugly received their glances.

Swamiji continued. "Now, do you know what the grass eats?"

The student was thrown off balance. "The grass?"

"The grass eats mud, and not only that but various kinds of faecal matter also. That is how the grass lives; by eating such a diet. So, when the grass eats this, the cow eats the grass, you eat the cow, logically, we can say you have eaten faecal matter."

Another uproar. The students hooted and stamped their feet.

In future talks, only questions dealing with the methods and practices of yoga were leveled at the Swami.

A Buddhist *bhikkhu* was interested in learning Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. He came to Swamiji in order to clear up some doubts. In the course of conversation, the topic of diet came up.

"Swamiji, what food is most beneficial to a person interested in meditation?"

"The simpler the diet, the better. Plain vegetarian food is best."

"In that case, I have a problem. As a *bhikkhu*, I beg for my food from householders. I must eat what they give me. Very often they give me meat."

"Why don't you simply refuse the meat and accept only vegetarian food?"

"Oh Swamiji, my custom is not to refuse anything the householder offers. I accept it, bow and walk away."

"You need not refuse it. Take it and then offer it in turn to some hungry dogs. When the people come to know you are not eating meat, they won't offer it. Only because they know you eat it, they give it. They would just give you vegetables if that is what you ate."

The *bhikkhu* shook his head. "No. Our custom is to accept anything that is given."

"That is only an excuse for the mind to eat meat. Will you eat whatever is offered?"

"We have to."

"Suppose a person gives you a ball of cowdung. Will you eat it?"

When the shock of such a question wore off, the *bhikkhu* answered, "Yes, yes. I would *accept* it."

"But would you *eat* it?"

"Ummm . . . I wouldn't actually *eat* it but I would use it to wash the room in my hut."

"In the same way, don't actually eat the offered meat. Accept it and let some dogs make use of it."

"Swamiji, I understand. I can see it is a trick of the mind to bring in all kinds of excuses. If I really wanted to live on a vegetarian diet, I could find the means to do it."

Whenever a chance for further service comes, serve without losing your equilibrium.

By 1919, Satchidananda's travels around the island of Ceylon greatly increased. Trincomalee was located on the northeastern seacoast, a great distance from many other parts of Ceylon. A group of devotees in the hill capital of Kandy decided to start a DLS branch. They persuaded Swamiji that this was a more centrally located spot than Trincomalee. From Kandy, Swamiji could easily drive all over Ceylon. He decided to make the move as Mataji was also in Trinco, and there wasn't enough work to necessitate their both being in the same place.

Kandy is surrounded by green hills and lakes. Once its botanical gardens were the largest in the world. Its temperature usually remains in the 70s. The Temple of the Tooth, the biggest Buddhist temple, is located in Kandy. Its relic is a tooth from the Buddha. Until the reign of Ceylon's last king, paradisaical Kandy was the capital city. But after the foreign invasion, materialism ruled over aesthetics and the capital was moved to the port of Colombo.

In September '55, Swamiji and the Kandy devotees began to search for their center. They discovered a lovely coconut garden, containing a huge building—an old *choultry*—and an adjoining temple situated on the banks of the Mahaveli Ganga.

They came to the temple trustees. Could they use this property for a yoga *ashram*? Immediately, the property was handed over and the devotees set to work repairing buildings and refurbishing the grounds. The new *ashram* was opened on October 29th.

At first Swamiji lived there alone. But soon, devotees came to join him, one by one. Eventually, fifteen *ashramites* lived there by the river, planning discussions, classes and yoga treatment for various physical illnesses.

Doctors have even used my body as a guinea pig, injecting me with various germs to see the reaction. The reaction is always the same, the germs are killed off. They don't seem to have any effect upon me.

A devotee of Swamiji's worked in a bank within walking distance of the *ashram*. He was an asthmatic. From time to time, he would be seized by a serious, choking attack.

Whenever he felt his asthma coming on, he hurried to the *ashram*, entered Swamiji's office and without a word, would sit by his side. Sometimes he would stay for half an hour, sometimes longer. As soon as the attack passed, he would quietly stand up, bow and, without a word, go back to his job.

"In Tennekumbura, a little outside of Kandy, lives one of the most well-known *sannyasi*: Swami Satchidananda, a beautiful apostle-head that could come directly from the Passion Play of Oberammergau.

"There he lives very simple, very humbly. No luxury. Nothing to attach to. In a spacious room that occupies the largest part of his house, there are only the most necessary pieces of furniture: a small writing desk, a seat and a small table with a couple of chairs to receive people who don't sit on the floor in the Eastern way. In the middle, everything is free. There, on a mat, he sits in the prayer posture and does his yoga exercises.

"Against the wall one sees a few Hindu statues, a Buddha and also a Crucifix. Also, a few sayings are hanging there; they give explanations about this strange mixture: 'Truth is nobody's monopoly,' and also 'Truth is One, but the ways that lead to it are many.' The Swami is a Hindu, but he has a reverence for all other religions. He studies the Holy Scriptures of Buddhism. He reads the Bible. 'One can learn from all the founders of religion,' he says 'because they are all prophets. They speak in the name of God and manifest in their life some of His qualities.'

"He did not enlarge upon the teachings of Hinduism. Maybe because the retreat we talked about is a school for life. He teaches people the way to happiness and the peace of the heart. He stressed very much that people who stay in the middle of life have the courage to retire every day for a few minutes from the hurry of existence and come to rest with God.

"Swami Satchidananda speaks slowly, calmly, simply. When one asks him questions, he does not interrupt but allows you to speak out quietly. Before he answers, he reflects a little while in silence. One feels that he has an immense respect for the people he talks with. That they can teach him something by their questions. When he gives explanations, he speaks with examples and parables—just as Christ must have done.

"I asked him what he finds most difficult in his life as a *sannyasi*. The answer was deep and very sincere, 'It is not easy to be detached from detachment.'"—From a Dutch article by Father R. Boudens, a Belgian monk.

Satchidananda Thapovanam, as it was called by Swamiji's devotees, became a meeting place for government officials. People from many different political parties held offices as trustees in the *ashram*. At one meeting, five different party leaders, Tamils as well Singhalese, sat down to discuss the welfare of the center.

Various clergymen came to the *ashram* as well. An All-Religious Group was organized, meeting once a month, sometimes at the *ashram*, sometimes at a seminary, the home of a Buddhist or a Muslim mosque.

Mr. Osmund Da Silva, Inspector General of Kandy's police, became a devotee. Swamiji began to conduct *hatha* classes for the men in the Police Training School. Many followed Da Silva's lead and became disciples of yoga.

He was visited in the Thapovanam by India's philosopher, Sir C. B. Ramaswamy Iyer. The Indian High Commissioner, Mr. Guntavia, was also a frequent guest.

He conducted *hatha* classes at the home of Mr. Jean Belloir, French consul to Ceylon. The American ambassador, Mr. Cecil Lyon, and his wife became interested in yoga. Swamiji conducted monthly classes in *hatha* and meditation at their home. Many of their

friends and embassy people were invited to these sessions.

The Kandy municipality organized a civic reception for Sri Rajendra Prasad, then President of India. It was to be a rather big and extravagant affair but a major problem arose. Who would officially receive the President? Kandy's population consisted mainly of Indian Tamils and Singhalese. If a member of one group were chosen, the others were sure to be slighted. Finally, the authorities unanimously decided to ask Swami Satchidananda to garland and receive the President on behalf of both groups. Rajendra Prasad was known to be a great devotee of Swami Sivananda's and had visited Ananda Kutir a number of times. Swamiji could, therefore, represent the city of Kandy as well as his *guru*.

You can see astral bodies, haloes around people, the different colors of the etheric body. You can develop that. Then you really understand people. The minute you see someone, you will see his etheric body as well. That shows the true calibre of a person, the condition of his mind.

Swami Satchidananda became famous throughout Ceylon. Everyone knew him, even the local thieves.

A burglar broke into a home near the *ashram*. It was a pitch-dark night and as he crept toward his car, parked in the road near Swamiji's cottage, he decided to see if the *guru* was absent. The house was empty. He thought, "So many people come to this man, he must have a great deal of money and jewelry."

He scrambled through a window and searched around. To his disappointment, he could find nothing of real interest except a few odd things and two purses. Gathering them with disgust, he quickly began to leave the premises.

As he reached the exit door, he stopped dead still. Before him stood a giant figure, taller than the door itself, luminous white, shining eerily from head to foot. The apparition blocked his way. A ghost!!! Shutting his eyes, he dropped everything but one purse and fled to his car, trembling violently.

When the *ashramites* realized the cottage had been broken into, they hurriedly called out the local police who arrived en masse. Returning to the cottage, Swamiji found large groups of men hurrying about. Some were examining tire tracks, others smeared the walls for fingerprints while another group simply stood around discussing the case with authority.

When he checked inside, he found the only thing missing was a purse containing a rupee and twenty-five cents. All the other items lay on the floor near the doorway.

The burglar was eventually tracked down through fingerprints found on the dropped articles. Still shaken several days after the event, his eyes opened wide and a shiver ran through his body when he repeated his story to the police.

"Swamiji," the police said. "We have caught the thief. He says he is not the man. That his fingerprints were on the items because he used to come and cook for you."

Swami checked out the ex-convict's photo.

"No, he never cooked for me."

"Well, what shall we do with him?"

"If he's so interested in cooking, let him come and do my cooking."

They would have sentenced him to such service but the owners of the neighboring house, also burgled, were not so generous and demanded he be imprisoned at once.

When the Lord is not inside, you won't find him outside either. He must be inside first. Then He is everywhere.

23,000 feet up the Himalayan range is glacier-capped Mt. Kailash, legendary home of Lord Siva. Along the way up to the peak are the homes of Tibetan peasants and monks. The farmers live in their wooden structures, high in the rocky peaks. Yaks graze lazily on the mountain grasses, tended by black-haired, laughing children in *chubas* and ear-flapped hats. Monasteries cling tenaciously to the bare hills. The more extravagant lamaseries pour over the landscape, like liquid boiling over a pot, level after level reaching into the sky. It is vast—awesomely, incredibly vast as heaven.

Prayer wheels and prayer flags spin and wing in the swooping winds—each rotation, each whip of the flag, vibrating thousands of *mantras*. Shrines protrude like rocks and pass below you as you climb up the glacier peaks.

In 1958, Swamiji made a pilgrimage to the holy mountain, along with Swami Premanandaji of Agra, Mr. Pravin Nanavathi of Bombay and Mr. Ramdas of Punjab.

Eight hundred miles of ups and downs, slow ascension, slow descension, traveling the rocky paths in the thin air. Swamiji lectured and visited villages on his way, schools, monasteries. They took no oxygen masks, nor were their clothes particularly heavy.

When a man makes a pilgrimage to holy Kailash, no one asks, "When will you be back?" It is enough that he is going to see the Lord's shrine, circumvent His peak and receive his *darshan*, his blessing.

At two points in the pilgrimage, Swamiji faced death. The group had just gone through the Untadura Pass, 18,500 feet up. They descended 500 feet to a glacier upon which they would spend the night. Swamiji slept inside a mummy bag, a tarpaulin spread below him. As he lay down to sleep, he heard the snow below him melt from the heat of his body, form a miniature brook, and flow away down the mountain. Near midnight, the cold had seeped within his body to such an extent that he began to shiver violently.

He was practically frozen. He felt his heartbeat slow down, his breath stop.

"Lord, what is this? I have come all the way here just to see you. I don't mind dying but if you want to take my life at least can't you wait until I am in sight of Mt. Kailash. If I die here I will certainly come straight to your feet, but the desire to see your holy shrine with my physical eye can't be fulfilled if I die now."

His body broke out in a cold sweat. He sat up and placed his head upon his knees, fighting for breath. Then gradually a new warmth swept through his entire system. Life began to seep back in. He didn't sleep for the rest of that night. Rather he prayed and wept, thanking the Lord.

At the height of 19,000 feet, they broke through a crust of ice and plunged into a glacial pool for a chilly bath.

After six weeks, they reached the goal. The end of the earth. The top of everything. Complete, pervasive, thick stillness. They meditated for a long time.

The group received the blessing on Kailash and began to descend. Exhausted from the day's hike, Swamiji waited for the ponyman to catch up with his horses, and mounted up. His pony was bareback and had no reins. As it began to rain, Swami took out his umbrella, opened it and guided the pony under a tree. The branches were low and he was forced to quickly close the umbrella. The sullen snap of the catch frightened the pony, who bolted and threw Swami onto a boulder at the side of the path. He fell on his chest, the breath was knocked out of his body. He said "Hari Om" and lay atop the rock, semi-conscious.

"Come on. Draw a breath in. Inhale deeply." The voice came from somewhere within him. It was the intelligence of the electricity that moves the gadget, the unseen force guiding the instrument to finish his work. "Breathe in."

Swamiji collected his strength for one deep inhala-

tion. His breath returned and his fingers and toes tingled with a fresh supply of blood. Within half an hour, he rejoined the group for the ride home.

The trip down, through the snow to the brown, flower-dotted hills, was a bit quicker.

"What did you gain by that pilgrimage?"

"A very good lesson," Swamiji answered. "There's no direct need for such pilgrimages. They only prepare you to see within. The Lord is everywhere. No pilgrimage alone can give you self-realization."

He went down through Kashmir to Amarnath and reached Rishikesh in time for the September 8th *Jayanthi* celebration of Gurudev.

If we always think of others and their benefit, if we travel to aid others when we are called, all calamities, wars, fights and quarrels will cease.

In 1919, Swami Satchidananda answered an invitation to give a series of lectures and demonstrations in the Far East. He spent two months in Hong Kong and Malaysia giving training in *asanas*, *pranayama*, concentration and meditation.

Hong Kong is an island of about thirty-two square miles. Because of its free port, it acts as a showcase for world consumer goods—East and West. The population is mainly Chinese who are involved in business, but there are hundreds of other cultures, languages, modes of dress, living there as well. Swamiji made a new product popular on the island: yoga, peace, self-realization.

Hatha classes were held in fifteen different places. Each class attracted fifty to sixty students. Periods for chanting and meditation, with full attendance were added as well.

About thirty-five Hong Kong devotees traveled with Swamiji to Lan Tao, an island twenty-five miles from Hong Kong. There they embarked upon a three-day yoga retreat in an old Buddhist monastery. No roads

led to it. There was no electricity. It was a fantastic success.

In any life you choose, even the worldly one, Yoga can benefit you. Through Yoga, you will relax more. Through a more tranquil mind, you will be healthier, if you are healthier, you will be happier, more able to accomplish all you set out to do.

A young Chinese couple came to Swamiji for advice. The wife complained about her husband's nature—he irritated her. She wanted a divorce.

Swamiji looked at the man. He appeared to be extremely nervous and weak.

He sat them down. "Before pressing your divorce suit, wait a few weeks. During that time, begin practice in *hatha* yoga. Then come back to me."

They returned holding hands toward the end of the month.

"We have decided to live together and not get a divorce," they beamed.

"Oh, why not?"

The wife said, "He seems to be more relaxed. He takes things easier. I no longer get upset so very quickly. We both seemed to have changed for the better. The only reason we can think of is the *hatha* yoga. As we continue it, we are finding we have both been able to relax. He can control his nerves. He is stronger. I don't seem to be so high-strung. I don't get irritated so easily."

Swamiji added to his lectures, as a benefit of yoga: yoga can help you to not divorce your family.

Mr. Lee, a man of about 55, lost most of his hair due to an illness. Swamiji suggested he start practicing the headstand. Within four months, his hair started growing again. Yoga can even help you not to lose your hair.

Sir Turner was the chief executive of the Hong Kong-Shanghai bank. He and his wife, Wendy, heard about Swamiji and his work through a mutual friend, a yoga instructor. They invited the Swami to tea and spent some hours with him, discussing yoga.

The following day, their six-year-old son, Michael, developed a painful ear infection. They were preparing to leave for a large party but the cries and discomfort of their child made them hesitate. Lady Turner thought of Swamiji and immediately called him for his opinion.

"Michael is having ear trouble. We don't know what to do. Can you help us in any way?"

"Put a small bit of glycerine on a cotton swab. As you apply it to Michael's ear, repeat a prayer to God. After a while, he'll sleep and you can go to the party. In the morning, he'll be better."

Soon after his mother applied the jelly, Michael fell asleep. Late that evening, when the Turners came home, he was still fast asleep. During the night, the boil within his ear burst and drained of pus, easing the inflammation. In the morning, he was fine.

The day before Swami's departure from Hong Kong, about five hundred devotees organized a grand send-off party. It was held in a large restaurant. Decorations were carefully hung. Lectures and speeches of gratitude were given. Asanas were demonstrated. The whole event was televised.

Afterwards, the group sat down to dine. There were white-clothed tables, twinkling with silverware and crystal goblets, cut glass bowls of appetizers and, in front of each person, a rather large plate holding a whole fish—head, eyes, tail, everything.

Students of yoga are supposed to be vegetarian—at least for their *guru's* going-away party. Swamiji looked into the plate and said, "What is this fish doing here?"

"Oh, Swamiji," the devotees said. "We are so pleased

with the service you have given us, we wanted to treat you with our favorite delicacy. We love it so much. Just for our sake, taste a little of it."

The *guru* couldn't fully believe they were offering him flesh to eat. He thought there must be a motive, perhaps a trick, behind it. He loved them and had faith in them. "Fine. If you really think I'll make you happy by eating this fish, I'll do it." He picked up his knife and started cutting the fish into sections.

All about was a great surge of devotees, peeking over one another's shoulders, watching him cut the food.

"Swamiji," someone laughed. "You must know our trick or else you wouldn't eat it."

"It's not real fish," another said. "It's soybean curd, colored and flavored and shaped like a fish."

Everyone applauded the Master. He raised his fork to his lips and calmly bit into the tail.

When you take a trip somewhere, you may sometime have to change vehicles during the journey. Sometimes the vehicle breaks down and you have to get another one. The body is a vehicle like that automobile body. When things go wrong, we get it repaired. Today, we can even put spare parts in—new eyes, new limbs, new hearts. But there are still limitations and when nothing can be repaired any longer, when the model becomes outdated, it must be cast aside.

Early in April '61, Swamiji was invited to make a second, more extensive Far Eastern tour. This time to cover Japan, Manila and the Philippines, as well as Hong Kong and Malaysia.

Before leaving, he received the news that Sri Velamai was in the hospital ill and decided to visit her, before proceeding on to Hong Kong.

He went directly to the hospital in Coimbatore. She lay in bed, small and weak. Around her on all

sides were friends and relatives with unhappy faces. Swamiji met her doctor in the hall.

"She can't survive much longer this way," the doctor informed him.

The youngest son sat down beside his mother. He held her hand gently and told her about the purpose of the body. "Don't expect to remain in this body too much longer."

Velammai nodded her head.

"Mama, you know how weak your body is now. Do you still want to spend time in this old, dilapidated body?"

"Son, I know it's not fit to live in much longer. I feel I'm just marking time."

Her attitude was one of complete acceptance. Satchidananda was very glad to see this.

"Your attitude is the correct one, Mama. If, by some chance, your body becomes fit once again, you can live in it for a few more years, but you shouldn't expect that. Make yourself ready. Prepare to say good-bye to this world when the time comes. Don't worry any longer about your family, your relations, all the worldly ties you have. They will take care of themselves. Take this opportunity to think of God. Meditate on Him and wait for His call."

He spoke to her as a *guru* to a disciple. He loved her very much, yet felt no attachment. His only interest was in her welfare and comfort.

She squeezed his hand and smiled, saying she would follow these instructions and begin her meditation that very day.

"Mama, I will pray for your peace."

When the friends and relatives, eavesdropping into the room, heard this conversation, they were quite unsettled. As soon as Satchidananda came out of his mother's room, they cornered him.

"What is this?"

"How could you tell her things like that?"

"You should not have said that!"

"Instead of her being encouraged, you discouraged her."

"How could you tell her she didn't have long to live?"

He remained calm. "You all know what I said was true. Even the doctor has told you that. I certainly don't want Mother to die, but I don't want her to live in a body that's not strong enough to support life. When the time comes, she should be ready to leave it. Now is the time for her to prepare for that journey. There's no point in my lying to her, telling her she'll live for many years."

He turned about and walked back to his mother's side.

"Mama, I'm going to Hong Kong. I don't know when I'll be coming back. Will you feel badly if I'm not by your side when you leave your body?"

She waved her hand. "No, no, not at all. All you could do for me you have already done. If, by chance, I go into a coma, I might not even recognize you even if you're right next to me." She patted his hand lightly. "Don't worry about my welfare," she consoled him. "Even if this is our last meeting, that's fine. We can say goodbye now."

Satchidananda embraced her. She kissed his hair and touched his hands for the last time. Then he left her side.

At the end of September, he returned from his tour and went directly to Ceylon.

Sitting in his cottage, a month later, he suddenly felt that his mother's situation had become critical. Closing his eyes, he envisioned her leaving her body. He went directly to his shrine room to pray for her welfare. When he came out, he walked to his picture of the Goddess Saraswati, hanging in the sitting room. He took it from its peg and turned it so that it faced the wall.

The following morning, the *ashramites* arrived for morning *satsang*. They noticed the peculiar position of Saraswati's portrait and asked whether they should reverse it once again.

"No. Let it be."

In the afternoon, two devotees arrived for their appointment. They brought their daughter and newborn grandchild. It was around 3 p.m. As he spoke to the devotees, he held the baby on his lap, bouncing him from time to time. After half an hour, one of the *ashramites* entered with a telegram from India.

Swamiji excused himself and opened this message. He read the news that his mother had passed away the previous day.

After a moment of silence, he put the telegram face down and turned his attention back to the guests and the baby.

After another hour, the visitors prepared to leave. He blessed the baby and returned him to his mother.

When the devotees had departed, a number of *ashramites* crowded into the *kutir*. A telegram from India signified urgent matters. They asked after its contents.

Swamiji passed the message around. Each *ashramite*, in turn, became depressed and sorrowful. Many burst into tears.

"How can you just sit there quietly after receiving such news? You should immediately go to India."

"You appear to be acting very hard-hearted, Swamiji. Your mother is no more and you just sit there."

The *guru's* reply was quiet. "Well, what can I do? I can't bring her back to life again. I had expected this. I was prepared for it."

"Is that why you turned the picture around?"

"Maybe so. Perhaps."

They looked at their Master in surprise. He had turned the picture around at the approximate time when his mother died.

"Let us all sit quietly and pray for her well-being."

The group sat in silence for some time, but with the end of their prayers came a renewal of their concern and their voices rose again. They insisted Swamiji go to India.

"If you really feel I should leave, perhaps you'd

better leave the *ashram*. Every day, I hear you repeating 'I am unborn; I never die.' What's the good of such repetition if you don't really believe it. What good is all your chanting and praying if you can be so depressed over this? Who has died? Has the mother died or was it just her body? When the body is old, it goes. That is natural."

The disciples became silent, somewhat pacified.

Later that day, however, Swamiji decided to make the trip to India anyway, for two reasons: to fully satisfy the *ashramites*, who though silent still brooded over the matter, and to make his father happy. Sri Kalyanasunderam was of a sentimental nature. He was sure to be hurt if his son didn't attend the funeral.

Indian plane connections are few and far between. Arrangements for flights must be made well in advance of departure and a large amount of red-tape is put in the way of processes as simple as changing money. Satchidananda decided it would be easier to travel to Chettipalayam by train and arrived the following evening—three days after his mother's death.

When he reached the village, the funeral was in process. The eldest brother had made all the necessary arrangements. Satchidananda was immediately surrounded by weeping, disconsolate relatives. He asked them to just sit quietly and pray for her peace.

The following day he met with his father alone.

"I am really surprised to see you," Sri Kalyanasunderam said. "Of course, it makes me very happy but why did you come? Mother told me you said your goodbyes at the hospital last time. Before she died, I asked if I should send you a telegram when she passed. She told me, 'Don't disturb him. He has his own work to do. He probably is just back from an exhausting tour. Don't bother him with such matters.' When she died, I sent the telegram anyway, just to let you know."

"I didn't come for Mother's sake. She is no longer in the body. Mainly, I came to console you. If I hadn't come, someday you might have thought, 'If he didn't

come to the funeral of his own mother, who he was so close to and who was so attached to him, will he come for my funeral?' You might worry about that and feel badly. I'm just here to tell you I *will* take care of that. If you want, I'll even be at your deathbed when the time comes."

Sri Kayanasunderam couldn't answer. His son was exactly right. He felt very reassured by those words.

Shortly after Velammai's death, her husband took the vows of *sannyas*. He visited a number of places of holy pilgrimage and then settled once again in Chettipalayam to meditate and study.

Later, in 1919, Swamiji had journeyed down through India to Bombay, after a meeting with the Dalai Lama. While waiting at the Madras Airport for his plane to Coimbatore to visit his father, he received a letter. He opened it on the plane. Sri Kalyanasunderam was very ill and near death. He reached Chettipalayam in time to fulfill his father's wish. Sri Kalyanasunderam was dead. His youngest son remained in the village another three days for the funeral, then returned to Ceylon.

I conducted a retreat in Jaffna at the beginning of July 1919. On the evening of July 14, I was at the home of Dr. Chelathuri, a devotee. A prayer meeting was being held. All the devotees were seated around me as I led the chanting. After a while, someone took my place and I continued to watch the *bhajan* from a place near the back of the room.

Around 7:00, a strange feeling spread throughout my body—a burning sensation from head to foot. I felt like fainting. I couldn't understand what the problem was and decided not to disturb anyone else. Slowly, I got up from my place and walked into the front

yard. The two daughters of my host noticed this and followed me outside. When they asked what they could do for me, I requested they bring me an easy chair so that I could sit down. Immediately, they went to fetch it. Seeing this, the doctor came outside as well and found me seated in the chair. The girls began to fan me with palm leaves to relieve the heat I felt.

For half an hour, I was not myself. I felt myself fall into a sort of trance. After a time, I came back to consciousness. The burning had disappeared but I was left with a feeling of great exhaustion. Almost immediately, a great charge of energy swept through me and the tiredness left. It made me feel completely alert and alive. I told the doctor and his children, 'Alright, let's go back in.' I felt that something mysterious had occurred, but what, I didn't exactly know. I knew Gurudev was ailing at the time, but I couldn't imagine his passing away.

After finishing the *bhajan* and saying goodbye to the devotees, a meal was served by my host. I just had something to drink and returned to my sleeping quarters.

All night I remained in a deep, meditative state, unable to sleep. Early in the morning, the radio news proclaimed the death of Swami Sivananda in Rishikesh. It had occurred the previous evening.

At the moment, my feelings were mixed. I was very sad about my Gurudev's passing, that he was in his body no more. At the same time, though, I was overjoyed with the feeling that my Master had entered into my own system.

Immediately, I left for Kandy, collected the travel documents and drove to Colombo for a flight. This time there was no problem. My devotees easily got me the proper exchange permit and within an hour had secured a direct flight. I flew to Rishikesh.

During the final ceremonies, a *sivalinga* was erected on Gurudev's tomb. I had the privilege of holding the *sivalinga* in position while Swami Chidananda fixed

it onto the tomb with special adhesive. This was during the *pradhista* ceremony.

After a few days at Ananda Kutir, I made a pilgrimage to Badrinath and stayed there for a week. Then I returned to Rishikesh for three weeks. During that time, Swami Chidananda was elected president of the Divine Life Society. I went back to Ceylon.

A young American woman named Yvonne Hanne-man went to the East on a Fulbright Scholarship to research and document folk art.

"When I flew from Bombay to Ceylon, I met a Ceylonese gentleman on the plane. We spoke about a range of things and, just as we walked down the plane's gangplank, he asked, 'What are you studying?' 'I'm here to document folk art.' My first step on Ceylon soil was accompanied by the words, 'Why, there's no folk art here!'

"For the first few months, I'd go to the Ceylonese bazaars and instead of finding beautiful clay bowls, pottery and pieces of folk art, I'd see plastic this and rubber that. It was so depressing. I found the only pieces of folk art that were fresh and alive were those things the people made by themselves to give to the Lord. They brought to the festivals something they had made. The Hindus always had fantastic garlands of real flowers to decorate their images with. So, the religious festivals turned out to be the source of my work. And, when I got into the festivals, in order to do a complete job, I had to learn their significance. As I'd always been interested in the philosophical side of things anyway, this was a sort of easy slide for me to make. I had read about reincarnation before and when you're in the East, somehow the gentleness and the atmosphere makes you aware that something else is definitely happening underneath.

"I was referred to several Hindu monks, *swamis*, to find out the information I needed. None of these *swamis* appealed to me—matted hair, skinny legs. I

had heard they were supposed to be very special people, but they didn't seem to be.

"My friend, Parvathi, suggested I meet Swami Sat-chidananda—that he could tell me all I needed to know. When she took me to meet him, he was sitting on a devotee's front porch, in a chair. Parvathi went and just lay down in front of him. The other persons with us followed suit. I thought, 'I'll *never* be able to do that! How can they lie down in front of him like that?' It was too . . . well, I just couldn't imagine myself doing it. The most I finally managed was a pretty good bow. I noticed he was sitting in the only chair, so I sat on the ground. One thing I did not know was that you never sit equal to a *swami* or a Buddhist monk. You sit beneath them. And they usually sat on a white piece of cloth, never directly on a chair.

"I was a little nervous at first, but every question I asked, he answered in a wonderfully plain, simple way. Finally, I ran out of questions, but I found him so groovy to be with, I just started inventing them. Just his physical presence alone was special. First of all, he could really speak English. Plus he seemed highly intelligent, with the ability to communicate in succinct meaningful sentences. I thought that was really amazing. Most of the people I met in Ceylon never did that. They were too busy finding out how many sisters and brothers I had, how long I was there for, who sent me, etc. But Swami never asked me any personal questions. He was really together.

"Pretty soon, I ran out of invented questions, too. He answered them so smoothly and quickly that I couldn't think of any more and I was getting a little foolish-sounding, so I said goodbye.

"Next time I came, I had a few more questions but mostly I just wanted to meet him again. There was little things I noticed about him. He looked, well, solid. I began to think, 'Now *this* is a *swami*.'

"I did meet people in Ceylon who were quite jealous of him. They told me things like, 'Oh, he's not

a traditional *swami*. He drives a car. He wears a wrist-watch.' But it was obvious to me he drove a car to get places shortly and serve more people, that he wore a watch to be on time.

"All my life up till then, I had always been interested in greatness—working for great people, doing great things. I was really interested in quality. I had worked for Charles Eames and Corbusier, and had always wanted to do something great myself. But on subsequent meetings with Swamiji, I began to feel, 'This is a great man right here and nobody even knows about him.' It was a new dimension for me—that greatness didn't have to be publicized and that one could just be oneself.

"Every answer Swami gave me was logical and complete. He would always throw in little extras. For example, at some of the festivals, people would pierce their skin, gouge hooks into the skin, and pull carts . . . walk on nails . . . walk on fire . . . hot coals. I asked him, 'Is this good or bad?' He said, 'I can't really say if it's good or bad, because what's good for one person isn't good for another. Some people like milk and love to drink it. Others don't like it at all; it makes them almost sick. It depends on your disposition. Basically, you have to be sincere. If you walk around with hooks in your back, showing your mind over matter and devotion to God, and the next day you turn around and stab somebody because you got into a fight, it's totally meaningless.'

"At one point, I gave him a couple of rolls of color film. I didn't know what else I could give him for answering all those questions. I knew film was rare in Ceylon and he had asked me a couple of questions about photography.

"One day, I was at a great, grand festival—the Perahera. The streets were completely cleared. All the people were lined up on either side, behind barricades. I had been given special permission to walk in the street in order to take pictures. I was walking backward down the street, photographing the ele-

phants approaching. I just kept stepping backward—walking, walking, walking . . . the next thing I knew, I had bumped into somebody. I turned around and there was Swami—completely laden down with cameras, light metres, movie film. With a big smile, he said, 'I'm using your film!' I thought, 'How wonderful. This is a real *swami* who can make the jump between East and West, not held down by all the Eastern customs and patterns. He's so practical.' ”

YOGIRAJ SWAMI SATCHIDANANDA— WEST

Physically, sometimes all this work is a bit tiring, but mentally I feel I am really giving something to people and that makes me happy. When I give more, I become happier. Of course, the body doesn't mind that much. Occasionally, I slow down and take it easy. But I don't feel really old. I still feel young because my mind is still young.

There is a Divine Plan behind everything, and if we allow ourselves to be used by that Unseen Force, as good instruments, many things can happen in a mysterious, miraculous way. If we interfere with that Plan by introducing our own plan, the egocentric plan, tension will be created. For in any event, ultimately, the Divine Plan will win out.

Ceylon is a tourist's paradise, natives, swaying palms. Many of the Western tourists, perhaps hearing a bit about yoga were directed to Satchidananda Thapovanam, Swamiji's *ashram*. The entire country knew of Swamiji and his work. Letters addressed to "Swami Satchidananda, Ceylon," were immediately routed to Kandy.

When these Westerners met him, they invariably said, "Swamiji, you must come to the West."

"Fine, fine. Certainly I will."

But the tourists would go back to their countries with their souvenirs and color photographs and the matter would end here.

In 1919, Swamiji was holding evening *satsang* with the *ashramites*. The telephone interrupted. It was Fred Da Silva, Swami's devotee and Kandy's Deputy Mayor.

"Swamiji, there is a young American man staying at my guest house. He seems to be interested in yoga and would like to come see you. When can you see him?"

"Well, we are having *satsang* now. He can come right away."

"He doesn't want to meet with you in front of others. He wants to see you all by himself, quietly. Can he come later on? Every morning, he sleeps until twelve or one o'clock. He starts getting up at five in the evening and doesn't go to bed until three. Ten o'clock tonight will be convenient for him. Can he come then?"

"If he is really interested, let me see him then. It's alright."

At ten, Conrad Rooks arrived at the *ashram*. He was blonde, tan, All-American looking, dressed in a well-pressed, lightweight suit.

The main room of the cottage was laid with a carpet upon which the devotees sat cross-legged. There was a chair for the *guru* and an extra chair for elderly guests or foreigners unused to sitting on the floor. Swamiji ushered Conrad to the extra chair.

"Swamiji, I can sit on the floor. I'm used to it. I'll just squat." He assumed a squatting position and lowered himself to the floor. His legs were crossed at the ankles and his knees reached almost to his chin. He was quite proud of his accomplishment.

"Very good. Are you comfortable?"

"Oh yes, I am used to sitting and meditating for a long time."

Swamiji was not meeting a novice who knew nothing about yoga.

"Swami, I don't want to take up much of your time. I just wanted to ask you one or two questions about *pranayama*, *Kundalini*, *japa*."

Not subjects for novices.

"Fine, you seem to know quite a bit. What are your doubts?"

Swamiji answered the guest's questions, one by one.

Finally, he said, "These few practices are not yoga, they are only aids. A person should practice yoga throughout his life, throughout all twenty-four hours. A man can't be a yogi for half an hour and a non-yogi all other times."

As the time passed, tension drained from the tanned face of the guest. His hands and even his legs appeared to relax. They continued their discussion. Suddenly, Conrad checked his watch.

"Swami, it's 12:30!"

"That's alright. Are you in a hurry to go?"

"No, no. I'm in no hurry, but I had originally expected to return to my house within about twenty minutes. I have left my taxi driver waiting outside all this time."

He ran to the road and found the driver slumped loosely over the wheel, asleep. He stayed with Swamiji until two in the morning.

"May I come again tomorrow?"

"Yes, what time will you come?"

"Any time you want. I would like to bathe in the river with you, meditate, learn some more, even take initiation from you."

"In that case, you can come for the bath at 6:30. Can you make it then?"

"Yes, yes, I can."

This was much different from the picture Mr. Da Silva had drawn—6:30???

At exactly the appointed hour, Conrad returned to the cottage for the bath. He was fully dressed in his well-pressed suit, cowboy boots and hat.

"Swami, are you ready?"

"Sure, let's go. Do you have anything to change into—a bathing suit?"

"No, but I don't mind. I can just take everything off and bathe."

"You mean you will come for a bath naked?"

"Yes, I'm used to it."

"Well, you may be used to it but this country isn't used to it. Here, take a towel."

Conrad wrapped the towel around his waist and followed Swamiji to the river. The *guru* walked into waist-deep water and repeated a prayer. Conrad watched quietly sitting in meditation.

During the course of the day, Swamiji introduced his new devotee to the techniques of *pranayama* and *japa*. By that time, Conrad's cameraman had arrived at the Thapovanam and begun shooting film.

"That seems to be a big camera," Swamiji said.

"It's a 35mm a professional camera."

Mr. Da Silva had remarked on the wealth of the young American and Swamiji assumed that he might have a hobby of making 35mm home movies. Later on, this footage was incorporated into Conrad's autobiographical film, "Chappaqua."

After two weeks, Conrad said, "I'm going to stay here for at least three months."

He visited the *ashram* for daily instruction and discussion with his *guru*. But after ten days, he received a cable from his office in Paris. He was requested to return for some urgent business matters.

"Swamiji, I don't know what to do. I'll do whatever you want. Shall I just reply that I'm not coming?"

"No," Swamiji counseled. "That's not fair. If you have some business to take care of, you'd better go back, settle everything and then come back."

Conrad left. A month later, Swamiji still hadn't heard from him.

After another few weeks, Swami received a call from B.O.A.C. in Colombo. "Swami Satchidananda? We have a ticket waiting for you, round-trip Colombo-Paris-Colombo. What date will you be flying?"

"What? I didn't buy any ticket. There must be some mistake."

"The ticket came from Paris."

"Who sent it?"

"A Mr. Conrad Rooks."

"Well, I can't give you a date now. I have no such plans. I will call you after I hear from Mr. Rooks myself."

B.O.A.C. informed Conrad of his *guru's* decision. Immediately, he sent off a cable: "I have already sent a ticket. I am unable to come to Ceylon so you must come and visit me here for at least two months. Take a holiday and see the West. At least see Europe. Please come."

Within fifteen days, Swamiji completed arrangements for the running of the *ashram* in his absence. He told his disciples he would return to Kandy in a month.

The sister of Satchidananda Mataji, Swami Vimalanandaji, initiated into *sannyas* by Swami, was put in charge of the Kandy Thapovanam.

"Some years before I met Swamiji, I was waiting for something. One day, I dreamed of a tall person, robed in *gerua* cloth. He holding up his right hand, but I couldn't clearly see his face. And he said, 'Wait for fifteen . . .' I couldn't hear his final words and I woke up. As I was waiting for something, in my anxiety I thought 'Fifteen days.' But fifteen days passed and still nothing happened. Then I thought, 'Fifteen months.' Nothing happened.

"After waiting fifteen years, on February 1, 1953, Swamiji placed his lotus feet in Trincomalee. From the time I saw him, I was drawn toward him like a needle to a magnet. I had a strong feeling that no harm could come to me if only I could hold his feet strong and tight. With all my faults and unwanted thoughts, I tried hard to surrender myself completely to Swamiji. Oh, what daily struggles I had within me. And Swamiji gave me the strength and courage to win the inner battles.

"In 1956, Swamiji was supposed to visit my niece with me. She lived about twenty-six miles from Kandy. Just before leaving, some devotees arrived and Swamiji asked me to go alone. My heart sank and also I became angry. 'You said you would take me and now you are asking me to go alone,' I said. 'Who takes whom and who goes with whom?' Swamiji asked. 'Are we not one in spirit. The body is an illusion.'"—Swami Vimalananda, Kandy, Ceylon.

It is time for the West to lead the way. I can see a bright future for the West. There is a great spiritual re-awakening.

It was Easter. On the way to Paris, Swamiji stopped at Cairo, Jerusalem and Rome.

Joachim Pillai of the Kandy seminary, a good friend of Swamiji's, wrote an introductory letter to Father Benoit, a Benedictine Monk in Jerusalem who headed a research group of a Bible school. Father Benoit wrote back that he would arrange Swamiji's accommodations there.

At his arrival, the Father went across the street from his Mission to reserve a room in the hotel for the Eastern monk. Swamiji waited for Father Benoit's return. A taxi pulled up and the Abbot, who headed the school, entered. He looked at Swamiji and Swamiji looked back at him.

When Father Benoit returned, the Abbot said, "Why should you put such a man up in a hotel. I think he should stay with us. Put him in a room and let him stay here as long as he wants."

Swamiji thanked the Abbot. He was led to an upstairs room that opened onto a view of the pink roofs of the entire city, its churches, synagogues, mosques and bazaars.

During his stay, he attended Mass and held discussions and lectures for the Mission fathers, teaching a number of the monks *hatha* techniques. Father

Benoit took him to the Holy Sepulchre where they meditated and arranged for a guide to accompany the *guru* to Bethlehem.

In Rome, Mr. Daraswamy, Ambassador from Ceylon to Rome, knew Swamiji well. He met him at the plane and brought him to his home as a guest.

They sat comfortably in a drawing room and discussed the sights worth seeing.

"Swamiji," the Ambassador asked. "Would you like to meet Pope Paul?"

Although he hadn't thought of it before, Swamiji agreed it would be a fine idea.

The Ambassador called the Vatican and spoke to Cardinal Morello. He was told a private audience with the Holy Father generally took a week to set up.

"Swamiji is leaving Rome tomorrow. He is committed to go to Paris."

"In that case," the Cardinal said, "let me meet Swamiji for a chat first. Then we can decide about his audience with the Holy Father."

"When do you want to see him?"

"Immediately."

Swamiji and Mr. Daraswamy visited the Cardinal in his Vatican office. A twenty minute meeting stretched to over two hours. Swami answered the Cardinal's questions about yoga and Hindu religion. At the end, Cardinal Morello said, "I haven't met a person like you before. I think you and the Holy Father must meet one another. I'll arrange for your private audience tomorrow."

The following day, Swamiji and the Ambassador returned to the Vatican. Swamiji had thought about the proper way to greet a Pope. He decided to do it in the traditional Indian fashion.

They walked through the long, high halls, feet softly click-clicking in the marble corridors. When they reached the Pope, Swamiji took out a lime and offered

it to the Holy Father. The Pope was rather surprised. He asked, "What does this lime signify?"

"When Hindus go to meet a sage, a *swami* or a great man, they bring along a lime. It symbolizes an offering and, at the same time, has a beneficial medicinal effect on the system. When you sit for a long time in meditation, a great deal of heat is produced. Bile secretion also develops. The lime juice serves as a remedy."

The Pope smiled and accepted the gift. They sat down.

Swamiji praised the Pope's efforts in trying to bring the entire Christian world together. "Now, why don't you come forward to bring the entire world together—all people, regardless of religious or racial differences. It is not only the Christians who should come together but all people should in the name of religious harmony. Your word could carry a great deal of weight in helping people realize the oneness of the spirit."

The Pope nodded in agreement. "Certainly that is a noble idea, Swamiji. But, for the time being, I think I should concentrate on putting my own house in order before going out to help the whole world."

Conrad was not at the Paris Airport. In his place was a secretary.

"Conrad is in London. He'll be back in about three days. Come and stay at his home."

They drove to Montmartre in a black taxicab, passing tourists photographing fountains, statues, one another . . . speeding through rotary turns and the narrow cobbled streets, past the river and the cafes.

For three days, Swami walked around the area, frequently visiting the Sacred Heart Church.

A small trickle of people, then larger and larger numbers began to call on him for private interviews. Through friends, he met Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Lambert, *hatha* instructors.

"We first saw Swamiji at the Ramakrishna Vedantic

Center near Paris. He came with a friend of ours. As soon as he appeared, my husband had to leave the dining room and go to the chapel, so struck was he by the appearance of this man. We at once recognized Swamiji as the eternal *guru* of the Indian tradition. Immediately we felt the significance of his presence for the spiritual work to be done in France.”—Janine Lambert, Paris, France.

When the headquarters of the Divine Life Society heard I was coming to the West, they asked me to visit some centers they knew of in Europe, to explain more about yoga. I wrote to these different centers from Paris. I received a very loving letter from Aalst, Belgium. It was the nicest one of all. From the moment I received it, I felt it came from beautiful people who would love me and whom I would love. This letter came from the Kiekens brothers. In Dutch, Kiekens means ‘chickens.’ Normally, it is the hen who gives warmth to the chickens, but in this case, it was the chickens who gave warmth to the hen. They received me in their homes. Every morning, they gave me coffee the way I like it. And their yogic family began to grow. I never believed in the benefits of chicken soup before, but now I can appreciate it.

Three weeks passed since leaving Kandy. One afternoon, Swamiji spoke with Conrad about different religions. Conrad told him about his trip to Mt. Athos, Greece—a peninsula cut off from the conveniences of the modern world. It was surrounded by the Aegean Sea and housed a great number of monasteries. All the inhabitants were monks and no woman, nor even a female animal, was allowed to set foot on its stony soil.

“There’s no point of my going on about it, Swamiji. I can’t explain in words how beautiful, how peaceful it is. You must go there and see for yourself.”

The secretary was ordered to the phone, making arrangements for transportation and accommodations. It was necessary to get a special letter from Greece's Cultural Ministry and a permit for the journey from the monks of Mt. Athos. In Athens, Swamiji had reservations at the Hotel Nirvana.

"Very good," he told Conrad. "I will be glad to attain Nirvana."

Once on the peninsula, he stayed at the oldest and largest of its twenty monasteries. There were many similarities between Hindu custom and the way in which these monks lived. They arose early in the morning for meditation. They never ate meat.

He asked the priests the reason for the regulation concerning women. None of the monks seemed to know why it was done. They said it was just custom and didn't seem very interested in the matter.

A letter from Conrad awaited him at Athens.

"I have made arrangements for you to stay another two weeks. You should go to Switzerland. You will really enjoy it."

He spoke to Conrad before leaving for Geneva.

"Swamiji, there is something I would like you to do for me there. Near Geneva, there is a place called Saint-Cerque, which has a small private school. I have heard about this school and want to know if it is a suitable place for my son. You suggested I should put him in a nice school where he can be well-educated and learn responsibility. I'd like you to investigate this one, stay as long as you want, and see if it's a good place to send the boy."

There were about forty boys from six to twelve at the school. Swamiji became their special playmate. He would lie on the rolling lawn and the boys would hold him by the legs and pull him all over. They would jump about him, laughing and prancing. Swamiji had a fantastic time with them. He spent all his days playing like a child.

In the evenings, the principal, Mr. Aubrey, would invite the local adults to listen to Swami's lectures on

yoga. While he was there, he started a small *hatha* class for those interested.

"How is the school?" Conrad asked.

"Fine. I am enjoying it very much."

"Conrad, two months are over. I said I would return in one. I'd better go back to Ceylon now."

"Swamiji, I've been watching you. I've seen so many Westerners benefit by your presence. Instead of going back to Ceylon, why don't you go around the other way and visit my country also. Then you can fly back to Ceylon via Japan."

"Well, I really wasn't prepared for such an event. If you think it's worthwhile, I'll do it." Swamiji had seen for many years how the Lord worked through him, how he was an instrument. This time he allowed his destiny to rest in Conrad's well-manicured hands, at least for the time being.

The secretary returned to the travel agency and exchanged Swamiji's ticket for a round-the-world one.

Two days later, Conrad said, "I don't think you'll enjoy America. It's a crazy, crazy country. If you go there, you'll probably develop a very poor opinion of Americans. I don't want you to think so little of us. You'd better go directly back to Ceylon."

They had to wait another three days for the changed reservation to be confirmed. During that time, a young New York artist arrived in Paris to work on some publicity material for "Chappaqua." For three days, Peter Max stayed in Paris, working on the material and finding time to visit and speak with Swamiji.

"The business which I came here for isn't as important as the business of meeting you, Swamiji. You should come to New York."

"Well, I don't go anywhere myself. This crazy man is pulling me here and there, but if Providence wants me to go, I'll go."

"I think I'll pray for your visit."

Conrad changed his mind. "Swamiji, I think you'd

better go through the States . . . but don't stop in New York. I mean, every other place is okay. You'd better go to California. It's really a beautiful place. If you avoid New York, the States are very nice."

"Alright, Conrad. I have told my friends in London I would visit if I passed that way again. Also, my good brother-monk in Montreal, Swami Vishnudevanandaji, would like me to visit him. Please arrange the ticket London-Montreal-California, then Japan."

While in London, Swami received a final call from Conrad. "When are you leaving for Montreal?"

"Day after tomorrow."

"Uhh, I think you'd better change it and stay for at least two days in New York. I was thinking, if you go back and people ask you where you've visited and you don't say New York, they'll ask why. And if you tell them I told you not to go, what will they think of me? New York is the world's biggest city. At least for the sake of seeing it, go there for two days. I'll call Peter Max and tell him you're coming."

"Fine. If you'd like that, I'll do it."

He canceled the direct flight to Montreal and had to wait another two days for his T.W.A. flight to New York. Conrad telephoned Peter with the new flight information: midnight, July 31st.

The day before the flight, T.W.A. went on strike. Swamiji made arrangements to go via Air Canada, stopover in Montreal for an hour, then go to New York. The airline agreed to send Swami's new cable to Peter and another to his friend, Yvonne Hanneman.

Though we can't always see it at the time, if we look upon events with some perspective, we see things always happen for our best interests. We are being guided in a way better than we know ourselves.

The transatlantic airliner was filled with cotton prints, summer suits, nauseated children. Stewardesses hopped

up and down the aisles, smiling broadly. Every so often, one of Swamiji's fellow passengers would furtively lean over and take a good look at this man with the long hair and grey beard, sitting comfortably, reading a magazine, wearing his orange silk outfit.

"Is there anybody meeting you at the airport?" his neighbor asked.

"Yes, I'm expecting one or two friends."

J.F.K. Airport, International Arrivals. It was late at night. Swamiji went through customs, looking up toward the glass-enclosed observation deck jammed with greeting parties like pickles in a jar. Neither Peter nor Yvonne were there. The airline had never sent the promised cables.

A co-passenger suggested, "Why don't you take the limousine with me to the West Side Terminal. Maybe your people will be waiting there."

The West Side Terminal's fluorescent lights glared onto vast, empty halls. A newspaper man leaned over his magazines, chewing a cigar while two dustmen made a pretense of tickling the long, dirty floors with their brooms. Peter and Yvonne weren't there. Swamiji decided to explore the New York Telephone directory and call them up. He walked to a stand. There were about four dog-eared, huge thick books.

"My goodness, how am I going to find them in here?" He flitted through page after page and, after a thirty-minute search, found Peter's number.

But he didn't know how to use the coin telephone.

It seemed all those people who weren't anywhere else in the Terminal were lined up at the information section. One harassed looking lady was taking care of their problems. Eventually, she met his gaze.

"Yes?" She looked at his orange outfit.

"Can you get a number for me?"

"Give it to me."

Before turning to the request of this bearded man, she filed her nails, skimmed through a pocket-book and worked on innumerable details. Eventually, Swami heard the voice of Peter's wife, Liz, on the other end.

"I'm Swami. I'm waiting for Mr. Peter Max."

"Swami! Where are you calling from?"

"West Side Terminal," he squinted in the lights.

"Peter is at the airport looking for you. But I'm home. Take a cab straight over. It's okay. I'd come get you but I'm going to have a baby soon and it's hard for me to get around."

He waited in front of the Terminal for a cab. There was no proper line. Whenever a cab pulled in, someone would run to the curb out-of-turn and grab it. Finally, he walked to the edge of the curb and waited until a bright yellow taxi pulled in front of him.

"Where we goin'?"

"I'm going to 118 Riverside Drive."

"That 84th?"

"I told you, Riverside Drive—118."

"Yeah, yeah. But is it 84th?"

"No, not 84. 118 . . . Riverside."

"84th, 85th, 83rd??? Don't worry, I'll getcha there."

He drove Swamiji right to the door, 118 Riverside and 84th Street.

Liz had never seen a *swami* before. Her big blue eyes widened as she let him in. He put his bag down and made himself comfortable in a white cane chair. The whole living room was white, white rugs, walls, ceilings. And where the walls weren't white, they were mirrored. Swami looked at the reflection of Swami, Swami, Swami stretching infinitely in either direction. He walked to the high windows and looked down fifteen stories out to the West Side Highway and its line of white headlights and red taillights, like a school diagram of the circulatory system. The wide patch of black further north was the Hudson River. Little lights bobbed up and down at the 79th Street Boat Basin, bigger ones swept up and down the waterway. The phone rang.

"Liz, has Swami called there?"

"Yes, Peter, he's sitting right here, in the living room."

"The living room? I'll be right back."

At 1 a.m., Peter threw open his front door with a resounding bang and raced into the living room.

By the following day, the apartment was filled with Peter's friends, all asking their various questions, all interested in this Swami. After a few hours of speaking, Swamiji excused himself and decided to try and find Yvonne Hanneman.

"The Christmas after I left Ceylon, I received a Christmas card from Swamiji. I thought, 'What is Swami doing? We talked about this and I told him I didn't consider myself a Christian. Why is he sending me a Christmas card?' I wrote him a small note and didn't hear from him until the following Christmas when I received another Christmas card.

"The next year, I received a letter from London, telling me he was coming to New York for two days and asking if I could make accommodations for him. I wrote back, 'Yes. But please stay longer. There are many people here interested in Eastern philosophy who would like to hear you speak.' The letter must have reached him but I didn't receive a reply due to an air strike. I knew what day he was expected but had no idea of his flight number or what time he was coming or where I could reach him. Then I realized my name wasn't even in the phone book and, because I was living in someone else's apartment, wasn't even on the door. I wondered if he'd ever find me but decided to paint the room he would be staying in, just in case.

"The afternoon after he was supposed to arrive, the family who owned this apartment came home unexpectedly early from vacation. I said, 'I've invited Swami to stay here.' But they didn't have any place else to go so we all decided to stay in one room and give Swamiji the other.

"I continued with my painting. Within an hour, there was a knock on the door. I opened it. There was Swami, standing so beautiful in his orange robes and smiling face in the middle of this dingy, grubby tenement on

East 21st Street. 'How did you ever find me?' 'I had an address from your last letter and just took a cab here. When I didn't see your name on the door, I asked the superintendent if he knew a certain photographer. Then he led me right to you.'

"He literally had to dig me out of a building in the middle of Manhattan.

"We went to the Empire State Building with a friend and her daughter. We thought the most important thing for Swami to be doing in New York was seeing all the sights.

"We had to wait on a long elevator line but eventually reached the top. After a while, Swami said, 'Wait a minute. I'll be right back.' We were busy looking through the telescopes and having a good time when, suddenly, I realized Swami hadn't returned. I figured I'd better look for him so he wouldn't get lost.

"I walked to the inside of the observation deck and saw a huge bank of machines—cigarette vendors, sandwich machines, Coke machines, candy machines—and there was Swami, standing right in front of the ice cream machine, reading the directions and concentrating very hard. It was the first automatic machines he had ever seen. I thought, 'I'd better not be seen checking up on him,' and went back inside.

"Just about a minute later, Swamiji came back. 'Hello. I have a little surprise for you.' He proudly presented each of us with an ice cream sandwich, taking the last for himself. 'I did it from the machine,' he smiled. 'Quite fine machines. It would be wonderful to have them in your house. You wouldn't have to do any cooking.'"

Though these American children didn't seem to know how to behave, I could see they were seeking. I wouldn't expect such treatment in India, but this wasn't India. Sometimes, I would think, 'Is this the way they behave in front of their own clergymen?' Then I would accept it, 'They are sincere, they are seekers.'

The original two-day stopover passed. Ten to fifteen people crowded into Peter's each evening to watch and listen. Swamiji was glad to see the interest of these Americans. He also began to understand Conrad's warnings. The visitors constantly smoked in his face and sat in front of him, stretching their legs practically into his lap. He accepted it. He continued answering their questions.

He was subject to tremendous discomfort, mostly because of the new students' lack of knowledge. Yvonne herself had no compunction about dragging him onto the subways, crowded buses, here and there all over the city. Often, she took him to Chinese restaurants. Eventually, Yvonne learned of his afternoon rest. After lunch, they would go back to her apartment and Swami would rest on the floor.

At the evening gatherings, the students would ask, "Swami . . . phoo . . . what is this *prana*?" while blowing smoke about the room. Finally he asked them not to do this, that it bothered his throat. They began to crowd into the bathroom to smoke their cigarettes and turn on to grass.

He spoke wherever he was invited, many times people came to see him either tripping or completely stoned. Once he told Yvonne, "Ah, they are quite nice, but they seem to be somewhat of playboys."

Liz Max was finding it difficult with the house always crowded, a small child to care for and another on the way. The group that had formed around Swami decided to move him elsewhere. Victor Zurbel offered his apartment.

"I'll stay at my friend's. You can use this."

He told Victor, "There's no need for you to move out just for my sake. If you like, you can stay here also."

Victor said, "Alright. I'll be at work the whole day. I'll just come here to sleep at night."

The group told him, "Swamiji, this is a very convenient place. Half a block down is Columbus Avenue where you can do your shopping. Half a block the other

way is Central Park. There's plenty of food here for you to cook." And they left.

Eventually, they realized for some reason, Swamiji didn't go out alone much. Once, Yvonne asked one of the boys in the group, "Would you mind taking Swami down the street to buy some socks?"

"Why can't he go himself?"

"I guess *swamis* don't like to travel alone much."

"He's a *swami*, isn't he? He should be able to do anything. I don't have the time."

Yvonne ended up buying the socks.

By the time many people started coming, they found out I wasn't a very capable cook. They would see me sitting and eating some antelope or cantaloupe and a few bananas and nuts. I never cooked anything. They asked me, 'What is this? You never cook anything.' I said, 'I'm sorry. I never learned cooking.'

At one discussion, Swami said, "If you really want to treat the *guru* properly, you'll cook for him and help him in all ways."

Seven of the girls decided to split the week's cooking between them. They each picked a day to go to Victor's and prepare Swami's meal.

That was the barest, gentlest beginning of their teaching on how to respect and treat the *guru*. Before that, nobody knew, nobody had any idea.

Victor brought a load of clothes to the Chinese laundry. Amongst the sheets, towels, shirts and pillowcases, were a number of Swami's silk pajama outfits. When he went to the laundry to pick up the clean packages, the laundryman winked.

"Beautiful clothes. You must have a beautiful lady staying with you."

"Oh no," Victor said. "It's a man."

The laundryman looked at Victor wide-eyed and handed over the bundle.

When the student is ready, the teacher appears.

Victor's apartment grew too small for the crowds of visitors who came to listen to Swami.

"We will have to move you to another place. We want you to stay a little longer. We'll move you to a bigger apartment."

Swamiji wondered if this interest could be sustained in his absence. He decided to test it.

"Alright. Go in search of another apartment and I'll stay a few more weeks. Meanwhile, while you look, I'll go to Montreal and visit Swami Vishnudevanandaji. When the apartment is ready call me."

"We'll get your ticket."

"I already have my ticket."

"We'll get it endorsed for you," the students insisted. "You don't have to bother."

The original ticket read Montreal-California. They wanted to make sure he'd return to New York. They bought him a new ticket to Canada, round-trip to Manhattan.

He flew to the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Camp, Val Morin. Swami Vishnu's center was a jewel—luxurious, modern accommodations for guests, rolling, soft green hills covered with tall trees, a blue black lake shimmering in the summer heat.

Within four days, the New York disciples began telephoning.

"Swamiji, the apartment is ready for you. Come back."

He stayed for a few more days as Vishnu's guest and returned to his new quarters at the Oliver Cromwell Hotel on West 72nd Street.

The suite contained a bedroom, a large living room, capable of holding large discussion groups and *hatha* classes, a kitchen and bathroom.

"How long is this reserved for?"

"Only three months."

"Only three months?" Swamiji briefly envisioned his Ceylonese *ashram*, in the warmth of late summer.

"Yes. But if you can't stay that long, we'll cancel. It doesn't matter."

Yoga expands the mind by a slow process and by your own work, without external influences. Your will is developed gradually. It is like a fruit that takes its own time to ripen and become sweet. It becomes ready, not by any outside chemical force, not by a sudden pick-up, but in its own time.

West 72nd Street between Central Park and Columbus Avenue. The Oliver Cromwell was basically a residents' hotel—elderly couples walking their dogs and quiet singles in business attire. When Swamiji took up residence there, the lobby was transformed into a psychedelic Grand Central Station.

Young men and women with long, loose, shiny hair and flowery bellbottoms changed into *hatha* outfits in the lobby's public bathrooms. Long, skinny models in electric green tights and minis lounged in the venerable armchairs, animatedly talking with advertising executives and photographers in transparent cowboy shirts and handlebar moustaches.

The elevators were jammed to overloading.

The youth of New York were ripe for yoga. Many of them came to the apartment in the Oliver Cromwell via "The Psychedelic Experience." The acid boom was on—sitars and Ravi Shankar, incense, patchouli, *saris*, silver bangles and Eastern philosophy palatably presented by Alan Watts and Timothy Leary. And somehow it all pointed them toward the study of yoga, although they hadn't the vaguest idea of the disciplines actually involved till much later. Yet they flocked to see this beautiful man, so serene in orange silk. And particularly his hair—that long, lovely hair so loved by Gurudev. Sivananda had foreseen what was to come and how these children, with their flowing curls would

come to him and see a teacher who understood their special needs.

Adults came to him as well. New York's philosophical yoga clique, members of the established yoga and Vedanta societies warned him against associating with these "flower children." Why, it could ruin his reputation as a Master. Didn't he know these people were *drug* users, pot smokers?

"Those things will drop off at the proper time," he chided. "I only know these children are sincere. I won't stop teaching them. I see the good in all of it."

The prophets of doom would leave. The children continued to crowd the Cromwell's elevators.

"I came to see Swamiji a day after Richie and I were married. My friend Kathy had said, 'You *must* see my *swami*.' I thought, 'What does she mean by *swami*? Pointy hat? Crystal ball?' But I went with her, mainly out of curiosity. When I saw him, I just couldn't believe it. He sat in the middle of so many people. He was so composed, serene. It was overwhelming. At the end of the lecture, Kathy introduced me to him. I was very shy. She said, 'This is my friend, Joanie. She just got married yesterday.' He gave me an incredibly radiant smile and then held my hands. He said, 'Yes. We can't all be *sannyasis*. Some of us have to marry so we can have all these beautiful children.'"

Upon Swamiji's return from three days at Niagara Falls, the devotees announced, "The Cromwell is again too small. We'll have to move elsev here."

A friend of one of the devotees offered them his apartment. For three days and nights, the new group toiled and sweated. After daily work, artists and businessmen would change their Edwardian suits for spotted jeans and paint the new quarters.

When the apartment was freshly painted, the owner

asked, "You'll only be using this two hours a day, right? For classes?"

"No. We actually thought you were giving it to us. We planned to move Swamiji in here permanently and use it for classes, lectures, everything."

"Well, look. I didn't know that. I misunderstood. I mean, my friends use this place from time to time. I didn't think I'd have to stop that."

Swamiji told his disappointed group, "You have done some good *karma* yoga work anyway. Leave it for him and his friends to enjoy."

Kim Jordan rode on the back of Ron Merrian's motorcycle, roaring through the City, on and off, answering each promising apartment ad in the *New York Times* and *Village Voice*. They located a spacious old nine room apartment at 500 West End Avenue and 84th Street. Hastily, a meeting of the group was called and money was scraped together for the rent and security.

Swamiji asked, "For how long are you taking this apartment?"

"We have signed a three year lease."

"I never thought this would happen." The monsoon was on in Ceylon.

"We're not going to detain you. Please go as soon as you want."

At the beginning, a lot of people approached me in the street but I just accepted it. I knew I wasn't dressed as everyone else was. And I enjoyed their interest.

He was too tall, too willowy and had too much hair to blend in with New York's grey unnoticed. And they always turned around to look—in buses, in restaurants, whenever he entered or exited from his apartment building.

He stood in front of 500 West End Avenue, waiting

for a cab. It was a sunny fall day. The rays bounced off apartment windows and the chrome of automobiles, reflecting on the long, tangerine robe he wore.

A car pulled up. A woman's face popped out of the driver's window.

"You should be ashamed of yourself!"

Swamiji looked back at her with curiosity.

"How can you do that . . . a grown man?"

"Do what, madam?" He asked politely.

"Walking around outside in your robe. It's cold out. It's not July, you know. You'll catch your death of cold. You better go home and change at once."

Swamiji looked down at his long, warm garment.

"Better put on something warm!" she warned, wound up her window and drove off.

Faith makes everything possible. Faith itself is God.

Bilious green walls, bare floors, peeling wallpaper—the new home of Swamiji's yoga center.

After a couple of empty days, a skeleton force of workers began re-painting, re-plastering and re-scraping in shifts of several hours apiece.

George Eager had surpassed his shift many times. He continued plastering, stripping off peeling paper, painting far into the night.

His chronic kidney problem began acting up and, as Swamiji passed through the dark hall, he noticed George in a doubled-up position.

"Are you feeling well?"

"Oh, it's nothing, Swamiji. I've had this kidney problem for a long time. It always goes away."

Swami walked to the kitchen, got a glass and filled it from the tap. He held it up, closed his eyes and whispered a chant over it. Giving it to George, he told him to drink the water.

"It will make you urinate quite a bit. But don't worry."

George drank the water and, a few minutes later,

cleaned his brush and caught a subway for home. As he rode downtown, he was struck by an overwhelming urge to urinate. He leaped off the train at the nearest station and dashed into the men's room. The water he passed was thick, profuse and of a greenish-blackish color. Until very late in the evening, he urinated continuously. The pain had left his kidneys and never returned.

Peter Max telephoned Swami. He and Liz were very worried. Their son, Adam, had come down with a high fever. He wasn't eating anything and couldn't sleep. The doctors had tried a number of remedies to bring down the fever, but nothing worked. Swamiji immediately went over.

Again, he chanted over a glass of tap water. "Take a few drops of this water on a spoon and give it to Adam."

Carefully, they opened their son's mouth and dripped the water in. He swallowed it. Quite soon, Adam began to cry. He was hungry and tired. The fever had passed.

It took all of Peter's willpower to prevent him from drinking the rest of the water himself.

Integral Yoga is a combination of specific methods designed to develop every aspect of the individual: physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. It is a scientific system which integrates the various branches of yoga in order to bring about a complete and harmonious development of the individual.

Hatha classes were set up on a permanent basis. Swamiji alternated classes with Lakshmi, a teacher he had met at Swami Vishnu's camp. She moved into the apartment and began organizing things. Friday evenings were set aside for lectures.

Each month, eleven of the original members pooled their money and paid the rent. Blythe Gilmour, now

Ma Yogabhakti, began to work on the organization's incorporation. The group decided the center needed a name. Swamiji attended their meeting.

"Any name you like is fine," he said. "I will take your suggestions."

A list of proposed names was submitted: Satchidananda Sangha, Satchidananda Center.

"Why don't we call it the Divine Life Society?" Swamiji suggested.

"Divinity, ugh."

"Swamiji, people are tired of such words—divinity, purity."

"Well," he said. "Then the name should have 'yoga' somewhere in it."

"Satchidananda Yoga Sangha."

"Our teaching here is an integral one, a synthesis. The world 'integral' was used very often by my Master. Integral Yoga should come in somewhere."

The group decided on Integral Yoga Center.

Swamiji suggested, "Why don't we call it Integral Yoga Institute?"

Visions of other institutions—jail, mental hospitals—passed through the minds of the devotees.

"Well, Swamiji, in the East that may be all good. But here 'institute' has a negative connotation."

Swami kept smiling. "No I think that would be better—IYI."

So it was named the Integral Yoga Institute.

Two years later, Yvonne was leafing through some notes in Swamiji's Ceylon diary. On one page was a proposal for a new *ashram* and center. Printed in large letters were the words "Integral Yoga Institute."

"Recently, we attended a Friday night discussion during which you were asked about fear and how to deal with it. You replied that fear is really fear of loss of something—whether material loss, or loss of health, or part of one's body or life, and you went on to explain that only through detachment can one conquer fear.

My wife was particularly drawn to this idea and it made a very deep impression on her. Unknown to her at the time, she was to lose a part of herself through major surgery, a malignant tumor in her breast.

"At the time of her hospitalization, she was able through meditation on your words regarding anxiety and loss, to maintain excellent spirits both before and after surgery and to achieve an attitude of detachment that has astounded all who have had contact with her during this time. She also related that to her astonishment, you seemed to appear to her on the evening following the surgery, and that the feeling of peacefulness and strength which your image evoked was a great and timely gift."

You can perform *japa*, repetition of a *mantra* or Sacred Word, in the midst of your day-to-day work. Then, when it becomes a habit, even when you are working intensely a portion of the mind will keep repeating the *mantra* always. Even in deep sleep, your mind will do this work. That means you have locked one end of your chain to a holy place, while the rest of the chain remains still in the outside world.

The institute grew through word of mouth. One person would go to a lecture, listen to Swamiji and bring ten people with him the following week. He began to give *japa* initiation. The ritual consisted of various blessings by Swamiji and the repetition of chants. Each initiate would individually enter Swamiji's private meditation room where he presented them with a *mantra* complementary to their particular vibration. The initiates were requested to fast the morning before initiation, dress simply and bring flowers and fruit.

"When I walked into the meditation room, it was as if the whole room were alive. I could see the air currents moving. The tiny room was rocking and vibrating, and Swamiji sat so still in the middle of it all, just like God."

By the second initiation, the group of initiates had swelled to fifteen, by the third, there were forty.

I never ask the students to stop using drugs, I never force them. I do feel these drugs are powerful and hypnotic. They give a brought-in experience, not developed by one's own self. It is something like a medicinally-induced sleep. Can you call that type of sleep as good as the normal sleep? They say they want to expand their consciousness. But when the drugs fail them, they turn to yoga consciousness.

Timothy Leary made an appointment to see Swamiji. He arrived at the IYI with a number of people. He began to tell Swami of his LSD experiences.

"Have you had any experiences without the drug so that you can compare the two?" Swamiji asked. "It would seem to me that the experience of complete calm and tranquility could not be obtained through any foreign agency."

"That's not so. We do have such experiences."

"I have heard of a number of incidents where people become emotionally upset during trips. Why do such things happen?"

Leary explained, "They don't know how to use it. They don't prepare themselves. They just take it. I don't approve of taking it in that way. I'd like to have an *ashram* where people could prepare themselves properly and then take the drug."

"In that case, why have you publicly said that the drug is good and everyone should try it? If you hadn't revealed such information, it wouldn't have gotten into everybody's hands. You would have been able to give it in a more controlled way."

"Scientific truths should be expressed to everyone." He admitted he had discussed this matter with his two colleagues. They had desired to keep the findings secret, He had opted for openness.

"Timothy, is it not a dangerous thing you have done? Now you can have no control over it?"

"Perhaps it is, but it's completely out of my hands now. Instead, I tell people if they want to try it they can come and stay with me. I wanted to have your opinion about it also."

"Well, I have no experience with LSD. If you want to try it, I would say, 'Go ahead.' Personally, I feel that's not the right approach. You have called these saint-making pills. To my knowledge, it takes lifetimes to create a saint, years and years. When you claim these pills can create saints, which takes so much time normally, why don't you try to create lesser things? For instance, if you could make a pill that would create an instant engineer or instant doctor, which takes only a few years of study, think how much time and money could be saved. It would really be wonderful. Why don't you show the world you can create engineers and doctors before trying to create so many saints?"

There is a great difference between the ancient yogis and the present-day ones. Today, you are being drawn out 100% in every way, from head to foot, through all your senses. Every cell of your body is being drawn out. There are hundreds of artificial forces at work. With all that, if you are still able to listen to a talk on yoga, it is really great. In the old days, apart from working and eating, there wasn't anything else in the way of recreation. To choose to practice yoga wasn't as great as it is today.

The monsoons had long passed. In December, Swami called the IYI together. "I have to go back."

"We'll continue with our work," they promised. "We'll keep giving classes and playing your tapes while you're away. As soon as you reach Ceylon, you can finish your work and then return to New York permanently."

"Well, I won't promise anything. We'll see what happens."

A public lecture was planned to be held on December 1st in New York's Community Church. The IYI had asked Allen Ginsberg to introduce Swamiji and Allen had agreed.

A number of Swami's older devotees and acquaintances heard that Allen was to give the introductory speech. They strongly objected.

"He doesn't seem to have a good name among many people. He is only popular with students."

"He doesn't hesitate to take off his clothes in public."
Shocking!

Swamiji asked the IYI why they had chosen Allen.

"He has a great influence over thousands of youngsters. They all love him. His presence at the lecture will attract more young people."

"Fine. Let him do it."

When Swami heard that Allen had met Swami Sivananda in Rishikesh, he was more eager to have him give the speech.

For weeks before the lecture, the IYI had leafleted and plastered the City with posters and handbills—a full-face portrait of Swamiji printed on sepia-tone. Swamiji staring benignly from tenement walls, construction fences, telephone poles. It also seemed as if every apartment in New York had a stolen Swami poster on the wall.

The church was filled. Even those who had objected came to see what would happen. Many who had voiced opposition apologized to Swamiji. The lecture had attracted hundreds of young people. Attendance at the IYI grew rapidly.

On Christmas Eve, Swami attended a devotee's party. Ravi Shankar and Allen Ginsberg were also present.

"Swamiji," Allen said, settling onto the floor next to him. "I'm going to give you a surprise Christmas gift."

"Fine. But I don't see anything in your hands."

"It's not to see, it's to feel."

"Yes?"

"Having met you, I have begun to feel I should give up smoking. My Christmas present is this—a promise to you that I will stop smoking."

Swamiji embraced him. **"That's wonderful. Really great!"**

Several months later, a devotee said, **"Allen has started smoking again. He said, 'Tell Swamiji I have fallen from my promise and won't come to see him until I stop again.'"**

Unless you understand the world and its truths, you can't understand the Higher Truth. Nobody can just ignore the world, run away from it, escape from it, and try to understand the Higher One. It is impossible. Even the so-called renunciates, if they have not understood the world, if the world doesn't drop from them by itself, if they fear the worldly life, if they chuck it off for selfish reasons, they will certainly get caught by it one day or another because they have not let it go by natural processes.

The very world is an examination field. You are being tested here, purified, given experiences. You are being made fit to understand the Basic One. The world is not a fetter but a help. It is going to shape you and make you fit to reach the Higher One.

The plane took off on a cold, grey January 4th and flew to Chicago. There he stayed with Swami Bhashyanandaji at the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center.

A nunnery was nearby. When the sisters learned of Swamiji's arrival in Chicago, they invited him to speak at their cloister.

Entering the nunnery was like entering a high security prison—through one door to a hall . . . a peephole

swiftly opened and shut . . . through a second door . . . closed tight . . . into a third. Here was a small room. Swamiji was to sit on a chair directly in front of a window. On the other side of the window were a number of seats. It was like watching TV. He watched as the black-clad sisters filed into the room on the other side of the screen. The sister-in-charge sat directly in front of Swamiji. He looked at the nuns and they looked at him. Then he spoke about yoga, its aims, its benefits. At the end he asked a question.

"Sister, why must these nuns always be confined?"

The sister-in-charge hesitated. Nervously, she glanced at the nuns behind her. "They are being trained. They spend most of their time in meditation."

"Yes, I know. But why can't they come out and see how the world is? They seem to be kept completely away from the world as if it were a dangerous place for them. That will create a wrong impression about the world outside."

The sister-in-charge jerked her head around and back to Swamiji.

He continued, "I don't think it's a natural growth. It's something like keeping a plant indoors without fresh air or sunlight. The plant will not have a natural growth. It will become pale and lose its color. The world itself is a big university. There is a lot to learn from it. They should be allowed out now and then to see what's happening there. To test their reactions. Then they can return to seclusion and analyze their feelings."

The faces behind the sister-in-charge lit up. She became a bit shaken and leaned toward the glass, lowering her voice.

"Swamiji! You should not tell them all these things. We can talk about it privately. They've already brought such ideas forward and now you're just stirring them up!"

Swamiji's voice remained on its previous level. "That's fine, that's good. They should do that. They should bring such things up."

"But Swamiji, we have to listen to the hierarchy. We can't just do what we want."

"Well, make the hierarchy aware of the situation here. Unless they know about it, they won't do anything about it. 'Ask, and it shall be given you'. The child must cry so that the mother will know it's hungry and can feed it. Let them do something. Make them think."

The plane carried him to Arizona—over convoluted desert-scapes, pinkly glowing in the twilight. He visited the Grand Canyon and Los Angeles—Marineland and Disneyland—and San Francisco.

"The moment I went into Disneyland, I felt like a young child. I went on the riverboat, the monorail, another small boat that takes you to a magic land where dolls are playing and jumping and dancing. At the same time, I was fascinated by the human mind behind all these mechanical marvels, how great it was to come up with such ideas. Everyone I saw there, especially the grownups, behaved like children, forgetting their worries, troubles and tensions.

"But the Grand Canyon showed the great force of nature. By constantly rubbing and rubbing and rubbing, you can cut so very deep. In the Grand Canyon, you can learn from nature how perseverance will allow you to gain whatever you wish. How that river cut down and down through the rocks. There is a Tamil saying, 'As the ant crawls, the rock is worn away.' The rock is so much heavier than the tiny ant but still, if the ant constantly takes the same route over the rock, again and again, he will eventually create a furrow. Just by constant trying, you can achieve anything you want."

"Dear Swamiji Satchidananda,

"How are you feeling? I'm Victoria. I can touch my head to my feet. I think I'm becoming a yogiraj like you and I can do lots of things better since I started yoga, even yoga poses and other things like talking and singing. I and the family does yoga every day before anything else.

But Danny doesn't do yoga, what is to be done? There is a girl who loves to do yoga and she loves to learn about yoga but she had a fight with us and she is a very, very, very, very bad girl, what is to be done? Please come back SOON.

Lots of Love . . .
—Yogiraj Victoria de Motta"
San Francisco, California

The plane flew over the Pacific . . . Hawaii . . . Japan . . . Hong Kong . . . Malaysia.

A huge reception was assembled in his honor at Colombo. It was February 22, 1967, almost a year since he had left on his one month holiday. Hundreds of friends and devotees greeted him. There were receptions in Kandy . . . Trincomalee . . . Jaffna.

Letters from New York awaited him at his cottage.

"The members of the IYI have asked me to write and urge you to come as soon as possible. They also want to know if you would care to have us publicize your arrival and have a mob of people waiting at the airport or would you just like the IYI children?

"There has been a mass spiritual awakening and a coming together of all people who can sense this. Thousands of people gathered in Central Park for a 'Be-In' just to be together. There was meditation, chanting, dancing, kite flying, loving and everybody dressed in colorful clothes with flowers and feathers. The only thing missing was our Swamiji. Come back soon! We all love you very much."

—J.W.

Swamiji met with Cecil Lyon and his wife. The American ambassador asked him to return to the United States. He had visited the Institute and seen the work being done there.

"Your presence is really needed there. It would be very nice if you went back."

The devotees in Ceylon were very unhappy.

Swami told them, "I've been in Ceylon for the past

sixteen years and I've served you all and the country as much as possible. I think I should go to the West where the need is greater. But every two years, at least, I'll spend a few months here."

Not all Tibetans are holy; they are just like anyone else. I have been there, lived with them, seen them. They are just normal people. There are many monks but there are burglars also. The holy people have taken the Chinese invasion easily. They feel it is a test and that it is God's work. Many people, however, really feel the pain. They feel quite badly about it. If you are possessed of that higher sense of wisdom, nothing is bad. All is good. Usually, those who believe in God the most are those who are tested most.

Conrad sent a cable from Paris: "Would you like to join me in a visit to Lama Govinda at Almora?"

Lama Govinda was a scholar and authority on Tibetan religion. Swamiji wrote back to Conrad, explaining he wished to stay in Ceylon until mid-April to celebrate the Tamil and Singhalese New Year with the devotees. After that, he could visit Almora.

Conrad joined him at the *ashram*. After the New Year, they traveled to Bombay and New Delhi, where Swamiji met Indira Gandhi. "Indira Gandhi was a wonderful surprise. We visited her at her residence and she was so humble, so simple, so down-to-earth. She walked into the room as if she had just come from an *ashram*, very loving and gentle. She wore a plain, white *sari* and a *mala* around her neck. When she saw me, she bowed down and made me sit in the largest chair in the room, while she took a small one by my side." They visited Lama Govinda. "In Lama Govinda, I saw a great scholar and authority on Tibetan Buddhism. Because of his constant involvement in Tibetan scriptures, he has imbibed all that great peace and serenity." Then on to Benares . . . Katmandu . . . and down to Dar-mashala for a meeting with the Dalai Lama.

Somehow, Conrad felt like a tiny intruder at a meeting between two giants. Swamiji asked the Dalai Lama about the psychedelic interpretations of various Tibetan Yoga books.

"No drug can give you these experiences. They can be reached only by going deep into meditation and not by any external agency."

"What about the opening of the third eye? There are books that claim this can be achieved by an operation."

The Dalai Lama said, "There is no external action involved. The third eye exists not on the physical plane but on the more subtle, spiritual level. It can be experienced only through deep meditation." He didn't approve of modern interpretations of the secret Tibetan practices.

He sat in a chair, a slight, delicate, bespectacled young man with intensely glowing eyes.

Swamiji later remarked, "I could feel a sanctity in him, although he appeared a bit young and modern. You could feel a higher spiritual experience pervading him. I felt a great deal of warmth in his presence."

A number of the Kandy *ashramites* had left the Thapovanam. They didn't wish to remain without Swamiji's presence. The temple authorities were requesting the land back for their own use. Vimalanandaji suggested they look for a new piece of property. A coconut grove was found nearby, close to the river. The disciples cleared the acre-and-a-half and Swamiji laid the foundation stone for the new building.

On May 24th, he returned to New York.

"His plane was due in from Paris at four in the afternoon. So around two his people gathered outside the Institute on West End Avenue to begin a caravan to JFK airport. It was a beautiful spring afternoon and Swami's people were happy and smiling and hugging each other.

"They piled in cars and drove to the airport and re-assembled in the upper lobby of the International Arrivals Building, where they waited for Swami's plane. They

looked great, with bells and flaming colors and flowers. And they stood around the top of the escalators waiting and not talking very much and admiring the building.

"One of them had a movie camera. He wound it and started to shoot, down on his knees and zooming in. Not much action. Just people waiting.

"But suddenly there was an audience. The camera convinced a hundred other passengers that there was indeed something strange about the people in colors. Just waiting around. They were making a movie. A hundred people formed a semicircle around Swami's people, watching them, waiting, careful not to walk through the middle.

"Swami's plane was late so this went on for three hours.

"Finally he arrived and came through customs, beaming and radiant, and his people came to him loving with garlands of flowers, and gathered around him to walk slowly a foot off the ground through the terminal, softly singing Hari Om, into a Swami orange sunset behind the limousine outside."

—Village Voice

Conrad arrived in New York.

"New York is hot and dirty in the summer. Swamiji shouldn't have to stay in the city all the time," he told the devotees.

The next day, he ordered a car and chauffeur for the IYI's disposal, so they could look for a summer house for Swamiji.

A devotee had leased a country home in Port Jervis, New York—a mountain area bordered by Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The house was surrounded by woods and cliffs, narrow, twig-choked streams and fields going slowly back to wildflowers and weeds. There were two buildings—the house itself and a small cottage a few hundred yards distant. Devotees could come up ten at a time. The cottage was re-painted for Swamiji's use.

"The '*ashram*' was set high on a hill, reached by a winding, well-rutted private road, cutting through pines and hedges.

"The end of the summer was very hot. The air was

always still. Five of us were visiting the house that weekend with Swamiji—my wife, Steve, Garland, Freddie and myself. After lunch, Swami suggested we take a walk in the woods. My wife said 'no.' She wanted to clean the kitchen and take a rest.

"The rest of us walked back of the house into the pine forest. It was warm and heavy. We walked until we reached a meadow. There was a rusty plow with white flowers growing near the driver's seat.

"We sat down on the grass and repeated some OM chanting. We all lay down with our arms over our heads, watching the clouds. I closed my eyes. I was still awake but I felt as if I were dreaming. I was moving very quickly through the clouds, higher and higher, looking down at myself and everyone else lying on the ground.

"Within a split second, I was back on the ground, sitting bolt upright. All the other boys were in the same position, sitting bolt upright, as if snapped from a deep sleep all of a sudden.

"Slowly, Swamiji raised himself up and smiled at us. We followed him back to the house. Later, when we compared notes, we found we had all shared the exact same experience."

Vijay and Shree were the first couple married by Swamiji. A week before their "*ashram*" wedding, their parents threw them a huge Jewish gala at a restaurant in the Bronx. Shree stood about five feet in her new white heels and long satin gown; Vijay stood with his arm about her shoulders, tails and top hat. The bridesmaids wore gold-trimmed *saris* and sandals and all the friends of the couple dressed in wide, embroidered Indian shirts and loose pants. Both a grandfather and Swamiji blessed the breaking of the *challa*—Hebrew and Sanskrit, spike heels, new chiffon, ringing silver toebells, sharkskin suits.

A mammoth piece of meat is ceremoniously rolled to the center of the floor, steam rising from the roast-

beef in great sweaty clouds. The bandleader gives a signal and his group swings into "I'm an Ole Cowhand, from the Rio Grande." He motions happily for the bride and groom to come up and give the first cut to those pounds of juicy beef. Vijay turns to his *guru* anxiously, "Swamiji, is it okay? I mean . . ."

"It's just for the ceremony, for your parents. Sure. Go ahead."

Vijay and Shree hurried back from their *tapas* to join their table for vegetable curry and rice.

By the end of the evening, the entire assemblage had joined in a circle, dancing and singing "Hare Rama, Hare Krishna."

The following weekend, forty guests traveled to the *ashram* for a ceremony performed by Swamiji. They ate *upma*, supervised by Swamiji. Pine branches covered the house. Wildflowers were twined into Shree's hair. She sat shivering in the late afternoon in her white *sari*. Swamiji carefully constructed twigs into a tepee. As he chanted, the couple alternately offered *ghee* to the fire. It arose smoky and odorous into the darkening sky. He scooped ash from the fire and passed it to each guest for application to the forehead.

May the indwelling Guru guide you all. May you be loving instruments in the hands of the Master.

Swami Sivananda's birthday was celebrated at New York's Village Theatre. Two thousand people came to watch Gurudev's devotees give tribute to Sivananda. There was a dancer performing traditional *bharata natyam* and one doing modern dance. There was a sitar player and a jazz musician, as well as a *hatha* demonstration and Swamiji's lecture.

"I am doing my best to live by the rules of your Holiness. And I thank you again and again for initiating me into *mantra* yoga. Little by little I am feeling the powers and glory of the Lord's name. Little by

little, I am reaching Him. While doing *japa* before the picture of Lord Siva and thy Holiness, my heart was melting with love and tears of joy ran down my cheeks. For short times, I felt the Divine Presence and the Divine Light, and I began to communicate with Lord Siva. It was as if he winked at me and called, 'Come to me, my child.' And I answered Him with my whole being. The picture was radiant with golden light, although it was only a pencil drawing I had made myself."—R.H., Aalst, Belgium.

Swamiji was invited to Belgium as the main speaker of the First International Yoga Convention, Brussels.

Aalst had been transferred into "Yogiville." The whole city appeared to be involved directly or indirectly with yoga practice. Swami was welcomed by the mayor at a civic reception, presented with flowers and the town's plaquet. He lectured on the realization of Oneness through meditation. He met the *bala yogis* of Aalst, a large group of children. Through his stories and parables, Swamiji initiated them into Divine Life for children. His face appeared in newspapers and magazines throughout Europe. On December 5th, he visited Father Bouden's monastery in Gijzegem and addressed the students. On the 8th and 9th, he addressed the Brussels Convention.

Eternal map, sweet and transcendental,
Such a star, come from such a faraway kingdom.
You shine at the door of the sanctuary
And you spread your warm radiance.

It is you who awakens, in the heart of our souls
A hope always being reborn.
Although our eyes are veiled or distracted by the agitation
of the world
It is you again who recall to us the infinite compassion
which illumines the door of the sanctuary
Where we must shine for all eternity.

—Usha Devi, Brussels, Belgium

Lecturing in Ghent, Ostend, Antwerp, Mons and Cherleroi, he returned to New York for his birthday.

Each devotee received a book and many received an extra gift, an Indian name—Vijay, Shree, Rama, Sita, Krishna, Radha, Narayan, Hari, Siva, Jai, Uma, Arjun, Aruna, Shankara, Maji, Asoka, Karuna, Valli, Muruga, Vimla, Vidya, Gita, Sasi, Muruga, Parvathi, Mashe-swara, Subramanya, Atma.

“December 1919, I was living at the Institute, acting as secretary. Vijay and I were working on a film script for Conrad and he asked me to come to Los Angeles to do a re-write.

“About two days before leaving, I asked Swamiji if I could go and he gave me his permission. As I was about to leave, to meet Conrad and go to the airport, I went to say goodbye to Swami.

“He was sitting at his desk as I came in and he said, ‘Sita, don’t go.’

“‘What?’

“‘No, I don’t want you to go.’

“A thousand things rushed into my mind at once—‘What should I do? Conrad will flip out if I don’t go. He’s counting on me. But if I do go, after Swami says not to, something terrible is bound to happen. Maybe the plane will crash. Maybe we’ll get into a car wreck on the way.’ I decided Swamiji had some inside information and walked over to the phone to call Conrad and cancel out.

“‘What are you doing?’ Swami asked.

“‘I’m calling Conrad to tell him I’m not going.’

“Swami took the receiver from my hand and placed it on its cradle. Then he started to laugh.

“‘What’s so funny?’ I was completely confused.

“‘It’s alright, Sita,’ he laughed. ‘You can go. But now I know you’ll come back.’

“He kept on laughing and laughing. I was really mad.

“‘How can you sit there and laugh after putting me

through a change like that. Do you have any idea what I just went through?"

"He continued to laugh. 'Don't miss your plane,' he said, giving me a hug and pushing me lightly out the door."

Let us march on and on. Let us not stop till the goal is reached. Let us set examples.

The IYI applied for Swamiji's resident's visa. The application was rejected. As yoga was not a religion, Swamiji couldn't be considered a religious minister.

Petitions and letters poured into the lawyers' office:

"Swami Satchidananda is a holy man. Whether he receives the people that will inevitably seek him out in a church, by a river or in Grand Central Station—it will make no difference. Whether he is allowed to remain or should he be banished to Tierra del Fuego, it will make no difference. He will still be a holy man."

—J.A.C., Production Design Associates,
New York City

"My name is Julius Zupan, a house painter. I have a son, Larry, 27 years old. It is more than a year that Swami became an influence on Larry's thinking, and Larry's activities with him have proven most rewarding, physically, morally and spiritually."

"As a Roman Catholic monk engaged in the study of Eastern religion and philosophy, I want to state that I have known the Swami from the time he came to this country, have had the privilege of discussing with him at length his religious and philosophical views, and am convinced that his presence here in the United States serves a spiritual need felt by representatives of many different religions."

—Brother D., New York City

. . . "I have appeared on religious and secular platforms with the Swami and have heard his sermons preached

throughout the City. Young people, for whom spiritual, physical and inspirational guidance previously appeared meaningless and impractical, 'Come to scoff and remain to pray.'"

—Rabbi J.C., New York City

. . . "Anyone having watched Swami Satchidananda addressing many hundreds of youngsters on the greens of Griffith Park in Los Angeles lately on a sunny winter day, could not fail to see the deep religious awakening his address brought to these young people. They were truly drinking in—absorbing—every word offered. It was truly a sermon to the living soul."

—E.H., Santa Barbara, California

"As an officer of the United States during World War II, I was officer-in-charge of the Ground School Administration of more than 10,000 Naval Aviation cadets and therefore have some idea of how badly young people need the sound advice of Swami Satchidananda of the Integral Yoga Institute."

—B.A., Greenwood Lake, N.Y.

. . . "I am a seventeen year old high school student. For the past six months, I have been studying yoga. Prior to this, I had been a frequent user of drugs for close to two years. Among the drugs that I have used are marijuana and hashish, codeine, amphetamines, methedrine, barbiturates, L.S.D. and S.T.P. I have smoked marijuana on more than 100 occasions and taken L.S.D. more than 25 times, with dosages to 2,000 micrograms. After studying yogi principles, I have completely stopped taking all drugs, and have even stopped smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol."

—M.E., New York City

. . . "I believe that Swami Satchidananda is an asset to this nation because of the fine work he is doing in the teaching of this ancient philosophy of yoga."

—J.G., United States Information Agency,
Washington, D.C.

"As a psychiatrist, I have sent several patients to this man, who I have felt could benefit from his teaching."

—L.B., M.D., New York City

. . . "The almost two thousand students from Manhattan College and Mt. St. Vincent, who attended his lecture here on campus last week did not think they were attending a philosophy lecture or they would not have been there. They were greeting a man who was addressing the spiritual needs of the younger generation. He was saying the same things the Church has been trying to say, but by saying them in a different language and a different context is saying it so they will listen."

**—D.C.H., Ass't Professor, Department of Theology,
Manhattan College, New York City**

. . . "From the moment I first talked to Swami Satchidananda, I began to realize that he understood the question and could help me find the answer within me and that in Swami Satchidananda I had found someone who could bring that answer to the surface. I had long ago lost faith in my Protestant raising and became an agnostic. The beautiful faith I had in God as a child became more and more distant as I got caught up in the confusion of everyday life. Swami Satchidananda has taught me that God does exist and that He is everywhere, if we only take the time to stop and look for Him."

—F.C., Cambridge, Massachusetts

. . . "As the signature below indicates, I am the editor of a young people's magazine in Hawaii which reaches 40,000 high school and college students monthly. Because of the Swami's importance to Hawaii, we will publish on March 15, a photo-art picture of him, the size of a newspaper page, for Hawaii's youth. Furthermore, we are now making plans to bring him back to Hawaii as soon as possible."

—J.S., Editor, *Young Hawaii*, Honolulu, Hawaii

. . . "I teach here in the graduate school of drama at Yale, and I am a playwright (my play, 'America Hurrah,' is running currently in New York). In both these capacities,

as well as personally, I have been greatly enriched by my contact, through his classes, with Swami Satchidananda during the past year. Any true understanding of foreign cultures must come through the authentic work of such inspired and modest men in our midst. And on such understanding lies our best hope for a peaceful world."

—J.C.I., New Haven, Connecticut

"Recently, the Swami lectured in a seminar at Daytop Village, a therapeutic community of ex-narcotics addicts. The people in the community were moved by Swami's presentation, and found it very rewarding and helpful. The influences of Swami on the Daytop community will remain with us and we all feel enriched at having had the benefit of being exposed to him."

—L.S., Daytop Village,
Staten Island, New York

. . . "In this world full of sorrow, misery and a craze for mere materialistic pursuits in the name of civilization, Yogiraj Swami Satchidananda has graciously condescended to offer his teachings to the public, by which man, the mortal, could be made to realize the real purpose in life, namely, to know one's self, concentrate on the Creator and attain bliss."

—T.R.S.P., Advocate, Coimbatore, India

. . . "The Swami has been a great inspiration and help, not only to myself but to hundreds more. Such Christ-like figures with genuine words of peace and love, have sustained the world from time immemorial. How necessary they are in our own troubled times."

—J.W., American Book Co.,
New York City

"August 2, 1919

"Dear Friends,

"Perhaps you have now heard the good news about the approval of Swami Satchidananda's permanent resident's visa, but I want to thank you personally and also thank you in behalf of Swamiji and the many friends and students of the Integral Yoga Institute.

"Your support was a great help in winning the case. In the final analysis, it was this kind of interest expressed by the American people that decided the favorable results."

**"Yours in the service of the Lord,
—Yvonne Hanneman, Board of Trustees"**

It was the first visa ever to come through under "A Minister of Divine Words."

We can see the same spirit in everybody only when we know we are that spirit, *atma* or self. Only a person who has understood his own self can see that same self in everybody. Till then, you can never see others as your own self. But with that spiritual vision, you are not different from anybody else. It is with this understanding Christ said, 'I and my Father are the same.' Because he himself became the holy spirit, he was able to understand the holy spirit.

Swamiji began to give lectures outside the IYI. He spoke at the Bucks County Seminar House . . . P.S. 42 in Manhattan . . . Vassar . . . Columbia . . . Mt. Saviour Monastery . . . the Lions Club . . . Ohio University . . . Princeton, and new disciples came, outside classes formed. The *hatha* hall outlived its usefulness as a lecture room and talks were moved to the Universalist Church.

At the end of January, he flew to California and Hawaii for lectures, t.v. appearances and radio interviews.

"I am very much anti-'uptight compartments' which exist among the spiritual teachers and I know with my personal experience that some of the spiritual teachers are shallow enough to get caught into the spiritual ego. But with grace and dignity Swami Satchidananda keeps himself away from this incurable disease, I bow to the Supreme Creator for His blessed gift to him. The softness, non-involvement and the fire to spread Truth and espe-

cially among the young people, I liked in him best. One day the children of the Aquarian Age will celebrate the glory of the Age of Aquarius, they will never forget that under what setbacks and handicaps this loving man brought Light to them and peace to their hearts."

—Yogi Bhajan, Los Angeles, California

The India tour was a strenuous journey. In most places, we stayed at youth clubs. What was most surprising was the reaction of the Indian people to them. Even I didn't expect such a thing to happen! At least in front of others, they behaved very nicely, seriously, well-disciplined. Through them America was seen in a better light.

The tour took off from Kennedy Airport on August 1st. Traveling around the world with Swamiji wasn't merely a glorified vacation. Instead it took on all the characteristics of a *sadhana*—hardship, illness—or pilgrimage to major religious centers. The group ranged in age from late adolescence to middle and old age, and was made up of between eighteen and twenty-five members, both men and women. Swamiji, with his flowing hair and saffron robes, and his students in their flowing hair and pastel pajamas were an instant crowd-gatherer.

On a realistic level, the tour became a matter of living in close proximity with many other bodies in situations far less comfortable than most of the group members had been accustomed to. People who had normally been generous and accommodating within the borders of their New York existence found they weren't, in fact, all they thought they were when put into situations as basic as who would have the most Coke to drink.

"During the beginning of the tour, Swamiji didn't know my last name or, at least, didn't appear to. He mispronounced it on two occasions while introducing

me. One morning at breakfast in San Francisco, I thought I'd mention it to him. So, I told him my name was 'Buchman.'

"'Buchman,' he said. 'Buchman. Hmmm. Then you should handle the bucks.'

"That night, Hari came up to my room and said, 'Swamiji wants you to be treasurer and handle all the money for the tour.' Up until that point, I thought I could hide in the back of the bus and chant all the time. Swamiji wasn't having any of that, though. Instead, I had to keep an exact accounting of every penny and present it to Swamiji."

New York—San Francisco—L.A.—Honolulu—Tokyo—Osaka—Hong Kong—Kuala Lumpur—Bangkok. One of the tour's main ideas was to visit as many holy places as possible. Particularly those where people had dedicated their time and energies to seeking enlightenment. They visited the Buddhist shrines of Nara and Osaka in Japan, as well as temples in Thailand.

India—they entered through Calcutta and immediately were right in the middle of new scents, crowded colors one on top of the other, sights swimming together and people—hundreds, thousands, throngs, knots, upright, prone, on one-leg, two, in autos and bullock carts, selling, buying, dying.

Traveling to Benares by rail they reached the sacred Ganges and decided to take their first bath in its waters. Under Swami's direction, they proceeded to the river early in the morning. Swamiji rowed about the group in a boat, instructing them how to perform the cleansing of body, mind and heart.

One of the group's members entered the water wearing a wristwatch and carrying his umbrella. As he waded in further and further, his arm lifted higher and higher until all that was left above water was a hand, a shock of hair, and an umbrella.

Swamiji rowed over. "The idea is to renounce everything when you enter the sacred Ganges. To leave your worldly possessions behind. It seems you're still a bit attached."

The devotee laughed, returned to the shore to detach himself from these final possessions and re-plunged.

They were obviously the first Americans to enter a second class Calcutta hotel for quite some time. The proprietors of the hotel's restaurant tried to make them feel at home.

"And what kind of prime meat, roast or steak will you have?"

"We're vegetarians. We'll just have some rice and vegetable curry."

"Cocktails? Whiskey?"

"Ummm . . . we don't drink."

A three piece, Glenn Miller-style 1919's jazz band appeared just as they started to repeat their meal prayer. High camp cacophony! They realized the group wasn't interested in ballroom dancing and quietly disappeared.

In the same city, they received an audience with India's lady saint, Ananda Moya Ma. The grace and dignity with which she and Swamiji received one another formed a lasting image to those present. The usual greeting of garlanding became a very sacred, brief ceremony between the two.

India has many temples into which non-Hindus may not enter. Poori's Bubhaneshwar Temple followed this rule. Swamiji made a special request at the office.

"These people are all very interested in Hindu philosophy."

The authorities remained rigid. "Only you can go in."

The group sat down, cross-legged on the road. Swamiji led them—"Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya, Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya." The sun darkened. Rain began to fall. People darted around them, running

to shelter. It poured and poured in sheets, in blankets of water. The group continued to chant.

The onlookers were incredulous. "See how devoted they are. Even we couldn't stay outside in such a downpour. It would be a terrible thing to stop them from having *darshan* in this temple."

The authorities remained adamant, rain or no rain. Quietly, the temple priests entered the sanctum sanctorum, bringing out fresh garlands and offerings of *prasad*. They garlanded this amazing *guru* and his equally astonishing disciples and fed them well.

The peace was so strong at Bodh Gaya the group wished to stay longer than planned. It was here Buddha attained enlightenment.

"Okay," Swamiji agreed. "We won't go to the other place. We'll just sit here awhile."

They sat under the cool darkness of a bo tree for *satsang*. Swamiji spoke of the way of the Buddha. After worship in the temple, the group repeated a chant they had learned through Swami at the Institute. "*Buddha bhagavan, Buddha bhagavan, Buddha bhagavan pahi mam; Bodhisattva, Bodhisattva, Bodhisattva raksha mam.*"

A number of priests stood around the group. They seemed excited. "What was that chant? We want to know that *mantra*."

Swamiji repeated it for them. He took out his notebook and wrote it down on slips of paper.

One of the monks wandered away, clutching his note, carefully repeating the chant over and over.

"We visited Ananda Kutir, Rishi's. It was during Swami Sivananda's *Jayanthi* celebration. Sivananda's presence was so strong, we kept expecting to see him come walking around a corner. A dozen or so of his disciples, all *swamis* were present. And they were all so many Satchidanandas. Very similar mannerisms. The way they spoke, expressing what they knew, was

so similar. On the night of Swami Sivananda's birthday, they showed movies of him. That's when I understood something about Swamiji I had never understood before. It showed Sivananda near the end of his life—full of vim and vigor, lively, jumping around, very quick and active, very sharp. It showed him walking here and there, shaking hands with people, greeting guests. Always moving, moving, moving. And it was just like Swamiji is. Satchidananda is just like Sivananda. He has taken on the qualities of action his Master had. The way Swamiji gives someone a piece of *prasad* is the way Gurudev did. The way he stands is the way Sivananda did. And it's not just an imitation. Swamiji just does it. He doesn't think about it. So many times, he says, 'I'm not doing anything. It's not Satchidananda. It's my Master, Swami Sivanandaji, working through me.' And it's true. On a physical plane, I saw it."

I had to keep an eye on all these people.

India is not a safe place for keeping things untouched or untaken. The group traveled by bogie, a railway car they could hook up to various trains. Swamiji warned them, "You are in India now. Be sure to lock up everything each time you leave the train."

The doors were locked and checked carefully, while the windows remained wide open to catch the infrequent gusts of shaggy breeze which stirred the hot, dusty air. One afternoon, Sub's trousers disappeared from their hook next to the window.

He made a general announcement. "Everyone has to keep their windows shut at all times. My pants were stolen right through an open window."

The worst had happened. Within a day, every member of the group was carefully adhering to the rule. Windows, as well as doors, were locked and checked thoroughly.

The following evening, Swami called Sub to his com-

partment. "Keep this safe condition always. Here are your pants back."

"Swamiji watched, even from afar, all our transactions. I always tried to be very careful about handling the group's money—always keeping my money in one pocket, the group's money in another, a separate envelope for receipts. But still, I wanted to be just loose and groove on what was happening a lot of the time, especially when we were in places of worship.

"One time we were in Hardwar. There was a great celebration, a beautiful festival where you could buy flowers, leaves and candles. They had stalls where they sold all this paraphernalia for worshipping. You would light a candle on a leaf, say a blessing over it, and put it right into the Ganges, flowing right through Hardwar at a terrific course. You couldn't even swim, that's how fast it was. If you wanted to bathe in the Ganges, they had a big chain rope and steps leading down because as soon as you get in up to your waist, if you let go, you'd be washed downstream. Really forceful.

"The river was rushing on by and there were thousands of people all over—lighting candles, putting them on leaves and floating them down the river. The Ganges was aglow with light. Bells were ringing and *mantras* chanted. We were doing this too—the whole group and Swamiji. It was one of those crowd scenes. I had just laid out money for our worship gear and all of a sudden it was time for us to have our group worship, giving our offerings to Mother Ganga. Well, I just got absorbed in it and really tried to worship the river. At the end, the money I had been carrying was gone. Just carelessly, for the first and only time on the trip, I had slipped it into the pouch of my airlines bag instead of under my *kurta*.

"It was gone and I really got upset. It wasn't so much the money, but I had put it into my receipt envelope with all the other receipts and they were gone too. I thought, 'What am I gonna do? I am going to get busted. Swamiji's really going to be angry with me.' All along, he had been cautioning us about pick-

pockets. He had said people would be attracted to us for many reasons.

"After the ceremony, Swamiji came up to me and said, 'Did you lose something?' He held up the missing envelope in front of my eyes and waved an admonishing finger at me, shaking his head. He had picked my pocket to teach me a lesson."

By the time we arrived in India, the children were very tired. And the Indian food, being spicy, didn't suit them. Many fell ill—but that was mostly physical. Their spirits were beautiful.

"Instances of Swamiji's fatherly affection abounded throughout the trip. On one occasion in particular, I had the opportunity to see this. While I was staying at the Kandy *ashram* in Ceylon, at the Temple of Kataragama I was bitten by a malarious mosquito. This manifested three weeks later in the form of high fever and the disease. I found myself greatly weakened and losing much weight due to constant perspiring. In the beginning, before we knew whether it was malaria or merely a high fever, I decided to take an enema and try to cleanse my system. Swamiji arranged for the necessary apparatus and brought it back to where we were staying. I was so weak, I had trouble standing and walking to the bathroom. Swamiji said a few quick words, telling me to call upon my natural strength. 'Use your will. Come on, apply yourself.' Throughout the night, he nursed me, happy to perform the most menial and distasteful jobs."

Krishna contracted dysentery in India. When he reached Ceylon, he was treated with a highly powerful medicine which ate through the walls of his stomach and infected his whole system with polyneuritis. He became weaker and weaker. Unable to eat, his weight fell to under 100 pounds. Swamiji took him to the hospital. A group of doctors from the ship "Hope"

came to visit the hospital and decided to take Krishna to the ship the next day for an operation.

During the night, Krishna fell into a strange sleep. It was more a reality than a dream. He was back at the *ashram* and seemed to be steadily rising above it. All the American *ashramites* were outside on the ground, waving to him, saying goodbye. Up in the air, he met Swamiji. Swami held him and said, "Goodbye. I can take you no further." Krishna said, "I understand." He felt a great feeling of freedom, elation, ecstasy—of light all around. He was entering into a great source of light.

He opened his eyes. He was back in the hospital room and it was morning. Sun streamed through the windows. The doctors returned to take him to the ship. They hurriedly examined him. His fever had broken and his body had begun to heal. They left him in the hospital to recover.

In India, I developed a fever from over-exertion. I was watching so many, nursing them. While I traveled from Palani to Chettipalayam with the children, I just lay in the back of the car, resting my head on one of their laps.

A devotee's home in Palani. The same house where Swamiji had performed months of rigorous *sadhana*. They sat in a circle. Half the circle was made up of American devotees, the other half Indian disciples. As the noon meal ended, Swamiji slowly went round, introducing each person, one by one. Finally, he reached the man seated next to him.

"And do you know who this is?" he asked mysteriously.

Dead silence. Each American carefully examined this Indian name for characteristics which would reveal his identity.

"Do you know?"

The silence deepened. Each devotee tried not to stare.

"This is my youngest son."

Several mouths dropped open. Here sat Swamiji's son! Yes . . . the facial characteristics were somewhat similar. They thought about it all the way to Chettipalayam, up and down the hills in the rattly bus.

"We arrived in Chettipalayam rather late. Hundreds and hundreds of people were waiting as the car pulled up. His two little grandchildren rushed to the door and pulled it open. 'Grandfather, grandpa. What happened? You're late. We've been waiting for you all day!' His eldest son stood behind them. He watched everything without speaking. He looked so much like Swamiji.

"And all of those hundreds of people wanted to come to Swamiji's feet for *darshan*. It was too much. He was so tired from the trip. His eldest son began pushing the people back to make a space for Swamiji to pass through into the hall. The rest of the group had come ahead by bus and were waiting on a platform. As I greeted them, Swamiji disappeared. After a few frantic moments of searching around through the crowd, I heard someone saying, 'Devi, Devi. Come here.' His eldest son grabbed me by the arm and led me to the rear of the building, to the latrines, and motioned that Swamiji was inside.

"We waited and waited and waited. Swamiji remained inside. I was becoming frightened. I really didn't know what was happening. We were all handicapped as far as communications. I spoke no Tamil and his son no English. We communicated through hand gestures and our mutually disturbed expression.

"All of a sudden we heard a loud, crashing, banging noise inside, as if something had fallen heavily to the floor. We both pushed the door open and raced inside. There was Swamiji, standing with his arms crossed, looking at us mischievously and smiling."

They continued down the small, winding road to Coimbatore's Divine Life Society for Swami's lecture.

The next day, they visited his uncle's farm. The bus was surrounded by a large group of devotees who came to say goodbye. Swamiji spoke to them quietly. Many of them cried. The two sons were there and the eldest brought his wife. They followed the bus down the tortuous road on their motorcycle, keeping pace until the bus picked up speed and they slowly dropped back, through the trees and the shrubbery, and disappeared behind a bend in the road.

"Ceylon is different from any other places I have seen. Still, my first thought, upon awakening and seeing the land in the light was—I have been here before. It all feels so familiar to me. I step outside and look at the forest. Coconut trees, banana trees with huge leaves and tiny bananas, all sorts of strange plant life. The earth is very rich and very brown. It rains every day this time of year.

"We are situated on a hill. Down the hill is our river. It is unlike most rivers I have seen because it really flows. You can look at it from anywhere and see it flowing. Its current is so strong that it is difficult to even stand in it and impossible to swim in it without being carried downstream and out of sight in just a few minutes.

"Much of the land around here is covered with rice paddies. There are houses and mud huts all over and very curious little boys and very shy little girls. All is green and grassy. All is peaceful and slow. I feel as though I belong here. It makes me think that perhaps I have lived here before this life. Either that, or I am remembering some old Tarzan movie.

"Our life is very simple. There is discipline but no strain. In fact, if one wishes, he need not even discipline himself. We have a schedule to follow but no one need follow it if he doesn't want to. It is sort of 'do your own thing in Paradise.' Of course, we are all here to practice yoga. This we do the best we can, although that does not always meet our goals. Here is an idea of a day at Satchidananda Thapovanam:

"At 4:30 a.m., a little alarm clock goes off and who-

ever's turn it is to wake everyone must somehow get himself out of bed. This done, he must incur the wrath of the others by waking them. Even softly chanting 'Hari Om' doesn't make up for being awakened at 4:30. Those who are up to it stumble out of bed or off the floor and get washed and ready for meditation at 5:00. One or two usually don't make it, depending on how much food they have stuffed themselves with the night before.

"From 5:00 to 6:00, we do *pranayama* and *japa*. From about 6:15 to 6:45, we do *asanas*. Breakfast is always at 8:00, however, and it is light. Some *apums*, a kind of pancake, bananas and milk.

"At about 9:00, Swamiji opens his door. We sit around and read our mail and he reads us the mail he has received from various people. We discuss things and watch and listen to him and when we are done, we quietly bow and leave.

"At about ten, the dance teachers come. Janaki, Kala, Hari, Ishwara and myself are attempting to learn *Bharata Vatyam*, classical Indian dance. At 11:30, we have another meditation. At 12:00, lunch, which is rice or some other grain, vegetables, bananas and curd.

"The entire afternoon, until 4:30 p.m., is reserved for personal *sadhana*. We practice, meditate, read, bathe in the river, whatever, as long as we do it quietly. Most of us become so quiet at this time we don't even move. It's really marvelous. At 4:30, we have another meditation, *bhajan*, and at 6:00 dinner.

"From 7:00 to 8:30, there is a music lesson, during which time Lakshman, the teacher, manages to teach four different people how to play as many different instruments at the same time. The noise is incredible.

"At 8:30, on some nights, Swamiji comes down for *satsang*. Usually, he gives us a lesson in something. Sometimes, it is on the *Gita* and recently he has been teaching us Sanskrit.

"At 9:30, we are ready for bed. Everything has an air of complete informality. It is unlike any other *ashram* life I have spent with Swamiji. We are here on our own, to do or not to do, to grow or not to

grow, as we wish. It is really pleasant, with only one drawback. It is sometimes difficult to do *sadhana* when there is nothing to do all day but *sadhana*. So, it is not unusual at any time during the day to find someone asleep or blankly staring into the air. But even this is good. I know every time I get into it myself, I have to think, 'Well, just what did I come here for anyhow if not to do *sadhana*,' and I start again.

"Living like this, in such a small group, so close to our *guru*, is bound to cause major changes in all of us. Even though we may not see these changes manifested for a while, the seeds are certainly being planted. I am slightly aware of subtle changes working in my own mind. Everything here is calm, curative, purifying, rebuilding."

The disciples were taken to the tea plantations with their *guru*. Four thousand workers, and all had been given the day off to see Swamiji. It looked like a postcard of St. Peter's on Easter Sunday. Hundreds stood on ridges, in trees, balanced on each other's shoulders for a better view. Mothers held up their infants to receive Swamiji's *darshan*.

At noon, Swami sat high on a platform where all could see him and get his blessings. The hot summer sun, low and orange, beat down. Sweat ran from everyone in profusion. While the blessings were given, not a word was spoken from 4,000 pairs of lips.

Sometimes, the American devotees forget who their *guru* really was. But to these workers. God had descended from Mt. Kailash and taken a body for that day. They struggled to touch his feet, to prostrate before him. And they chanted, thousands of voices echoed to the name of the Lord and Swamiji.

In the Hindu calendar, every day of the week belongs to a particular deity. There is a day for creation and one for destruction. But Thursday is the day for

worship of the *guru*. At the *ashram*, the devotees fasted on Thursday—some of them, some of the time.

And Swamiji knew of this. On Thursdays, he would greet them at the cottage as usual. On this day, however, he usually had some special *prasad* awaiting them. A box of chocolates, the ultimate temptation. And each of the fasting devotees reacted to his offer in their own way. Some thought, "Oh no. If I eat one thing, I'll never be able to keep up the fast." Others, "I'll just take one and save it for tomorrow." Still others, "Something from Swamiji. Of course, I'll eat it."

Eventually, one Thursday, they asked him, "Swamiji, what are you doing to us?"

"If you have the right attitude about *prasad*, it's not food. You are taking a blessing. If you take it with that consciousness, it won't even affect the digestive system."

"He gave us everything. And, at one point, he gave us spiritual experience also. It was one evening at meditation. After an hour, I mostly wasn't meditating too much. My legs hurt. I was thinking, 'Well, it must be close to the end by now.' I was still repeating the *mantra* but without too much devotion or feeling. Suddenly, I felt very uplifted, very concentrated again. The pain in my knees disappeared. My *mantra* started repeating itself, while I watched the whole experience. I felt a part of it and away from it at the same time. My *mantra* stopped. The only thing that existed at that moment was sound. The *mantra* was just there. I could somehow look at it and perceive it visually. I was seeing sound. Endless sound. The same sound. It was all there at once. It had no beginning. No end. I was in that presence for who knows how long. But as long as it lasted, it was eternal time. It was timelessness. I felt no physical existence or consciousness. At the same time, there was me and there was this. But we were existing at the same time.

"After a while, the mind came back in, but I was able to witness the mind. The body came back. Time came back but still I could watch time. Thinking

came back; I could watch thinking. Someone started chanting to end the meditation. I watched myself repeating the chants. I heard Swamiji's voice amongst us. After the chants, I bowed forward, sat up, and opened my eyes. I became aware of other people around me. That we were in a meditation room. In an *ashram*. In Ceylon. It was like waking up to the physical world. I looked around, and as I did, I saw Swamiji just walking out the door. I hadn't heard him come in.

"Swamiji had brought this consciousness to us. Krishna, Kala, Jai, Ishwara, Hari, myself, all looked at one another. We all knew what had happened. Without saying anything, we could see it in each other. We shared this consciousness. He has that consciousness all the time."

They traveled all over the world. And throughout the world, Swamiji's devotees came forward. Wives, children, businessmen, artists. They ran the gamut of age, color, religion, sharing one thing in common, their Master and their goal.

"Our new institute has officially opened on the first of September, 1968, and we now have a much bigger place at our disposal than before. We are in close relation with Andre and Denise van Lysebeth of the Belgian IYL. We have seen that they have put their institute under your benediction and guidance. We would very much like to adapt a similar attitude and are asking you, therefore, if you would accept that our institute is also put under your guidance and that we are allowed to call the same also, International Yoga Institute."—Mr. & Mme. A. R. Hug, Lausanne, Switzerland.

On the way to New York, Swamiji visited Denmark, England, Lausanne, the IYIs in Paris and Brussels and Aalst Yoga Vedanta.

"One of the great drawing powers of Hinduism is its diversity, its special lack of dogmatism. When a yoga

teacher is asked to tell you which are the good yoga places and which are the bad, the almost invariable answer is: They all do good in their own fashion. Different people need different approaches.

"Swami Satchidananda has more than his share of charisma. The Swami is just back from an around-the-world trip that he made with a group of his students. He is giving a lecture at Carnegie Hall on January 31."
—*New York* magazine.

He sold out Carnegie Hall.

There is an *ashram* a little over an hour from the City. It is owned by the Yoga Society of New York. Within its boundaries—three white wooden buildings, a lake with a miniature island, gardens and grassy hills—all memory of the soot and noise of Manhattan dissipates and the mind becomes aware only of the fresh air, the blue mountains tumbling one on another, the peace, the silence.

Swamiji was invited to Ananda—that is its name—as a guest speaker. He became a friend and guide to its members. They asked if he would like to use the *ashram* as a weekly retreat, reserving a cottage on the grounds for his personal use.

Members of the IYI arrived on the weekends. The grounds were tilled and re-seeded; a partially destroyed building was re-constructed; the hazardous bridge to the island was dismantled. There were vegetable gardens put in and fresh coats of paint. Everywhere was Swamiji—repairing the tractor, working on a stereo set or car, supervising the disciples.

"One day he scolded me for allowing the workshop to be dirty and sloppy. I had been sitting on the floor and not stood up when he came in with my wife. He really lit into me when I was too dull even to stand up.

"‘Stand up. You don’t even show your *guru* the respect you would pay to your father and grandfather.’

"I thought he was really angry and I was terrified.

"In the middle of his tirade of admonitions, he

stopped abruptly and turned to my wife. 'I'm not being too rough on him, am I?' he winked."

Evenness of mind. He taught this balance in many ways. Sometimes, he gave the devotees specific instructions, completely reversing them the next day.

There is an old station wagon at the *ashram*, lumpily serving its purpose as a work-horse. Swamiji instructed Maheshwara never to drive the car over twenty-five miles per hour. Soon after, Mahesh drove Swami back to the *ashram* from the local garage. He crept along at 25 m.p.h. Swamiji kept checking the speedometer, playing with the gearshift as Mahesh tried to guide the car.

"What's wrong with the car?" he asked. "Is the engine broken?"

"No, Swamiji."

"Why are we going so slow?"

"The car is fine. You told me to drive it at this speed."

"I said that? Come on. Go faster. We have to get home."

He chuckled and patted Mahesh on the shoulder as the car picked up speed.

It was about 8 p.m. when Swami arrived at the cottage with two disciples. It had started drizzling on the way from the City. The temperature was near freezing.

"Is it warm in the house?" we asked.

"Sure." Shanti promised. "As soon as the thermostat is on it really heats up."

Shanti flipped it on. Nothing.

"It takes a few minutes." The radiators remained lumps of ice. Stone cold.

Swami called from upstairs. "Shanti. What is happening?"

"The thermostat isn't going on."

Down he came—orange robe, orange crocheted cap, black rubbers and an open tan ski parka over his shoulders. He tromped out into the slushy drizzle to

the boiler room in back of the cottage, sitting silent and moody.

There were sounds of tinkering and grinding. Calls for a hammer, a screwdriver. Then the low, slowly mounting vibration—just like when your motor turns over after almost giving up on a cold dark morning.

The ancient boiler had met its match. Swami swung back into the kitchen and ordered a hot chocolate.

"I met Swami Satchidananda on a sunny spring morning at Ananda Ashram, after coming all the way from California. But the first time I heard about him, I was staying at the Abbey of New Clairvaux, a Trappist monastery north of Sacramento, where my cousin Brother Paul was a monk. I was wondering if I could become a monk like him. But, at the same time, I was reading a lot about yoga, especially the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* and the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. I wanted to have a *guru* like Ramakrishna, always God-intoxicated, caring nothing for the world. I believed that personal possessions limited my freedom so I had already given away or destroyed almost all my belongings before coming to visit the monastery. My cousin, a real monk, actually had more personal possessions than me. For instance, he loaned me his fingernail clippers. I also believed that a religious aspirant should not work. He should let God take care of him. He should not make any decisions for himself. I believed what I read, that when the disciple is ready, the *guru* appears, and so I was just waiting for him to appear, to guide me on whether I should become a monk or follow some other path to find God.

"Then a letter reached my cousin from another monk in a Trappist monastery in Massachusetts. The letter contained news that an Indian *swami* recently visited them to talk on yoga, accompanied by some disciples who gave a demonstration. When Brother Paul told me the news, immediately I wondered if this *swami* was the *guru* I awaited. Right away, I urged my

cousin to find out more about him. We found out his name was Yogiraj Sri Swami Satchidananda. The 'Yogiraj' reminded me of the *Raja Yoga of Patanjali*, so I was encouraged to sit down and write him a letter, my first one to a *swami*. I introduced myself, stating my sincere desire to find a *guru*, and asked him what to do. Although I had never seen this *swami*, I somehow felt confidence in him. There was a long wait for his reply, three weeks or more. When his letter finally came, with my name neatly typed on it, I felt a tremendous excitement. The letter began 'Dear Child.' Even this was enough. This simple, direct, loving address produced such a feeling in me I didn't have to read another word to know it was a Master speaking. But would he accept me as one of his disciples? The Swami noted my keen interest in yoga and invited me, if I wished, to come see him in person so he could better come to know me and guide me on my path.

"I prepared to start on my pilgrimage to New York by renouncing the very last of my possessions, except for what seemed absolutely necessary to the trip. In a way, I wanted to test my faith in God's love for me. If I could reach New York in spite of the obstacles, it would prove God wanted me to go to the Swami. I emptied my pockets of money. I gave Brother Paul my silver pin souvenir from the Golden Buddha Temple in Bangkok. I even threw away my glasses. Standing on a fallen tree trunk above a creek, I recited, 'The world is a dream. I will never work again,' and tossed them into the water. After all, I didn't need glasses except to work. I supposed that Swami would take care of me in his *ashram*.

"Early, before sunrise the following morning, after the morning prayers, Brother Paul hugged me goodbye at the monastery gate. He made me wear his blue denim jacket over my shirt. But, only a few hours later, as the day warmed up and I walked down the road, I took it off and left it hanging over a bridge railing, for someone who needed it more than me to find. I was glad to free myself of one more binding possession.

Less than a week later, by the grace of God, I was dropped off in Manhattan—cold, wet and hungry but excited to be near the end of my lightening pilgrimage. I called on a former acquaintance, who let me sleep on his floor.

“When I reached the Institute the next morning, Hari met me and read Swami’s letter. He told me to telephone upstate where the Swami was spending the week.

“Near the waiting room phone was a big framed photograph of an Indian man with very long, dark hair and beard. ‘Is that the Swami?’ I asked. ‘Yes.’ He looked like a real *swami*, very wild and holy looking. Hari dialed the *ashram* and handed me the phone. When Swami himself answered the phone, I knew it must be him by the sound of his voice but I hesitated to say, ‘Is it you?’ or something disrespectful. I asked if I could please speak with Swami Satchidananda. The voice asked me who was calling. I told him my name, mentioned the letter, and again requested to speak with the Swami. There was a pause. Then quietly but clearly, in an almost musical way, he said, ‘This is he.’ I felt an electric sensation. In a rush, I told him how fast I had come from California to meet him and could I come up to his *ashram*. ‘Yes. When?’ ‘Now. Today.’ ‘No, not today. Come tomorrow morning.’ Another day to wait. I was learning the *guru* doesn’t necessarily appear all at once. Sometimes, he appeared step by step.

“The next morning, I had a good shower, changed to clean clothes and took the first bus to Ananda Ashram from the Port Authority. Even without my glasses, I spotted the wooden arrow on the pole near the bus stop, pointing to the *ashram*. When I reached the main house, a boy came from around a corner and told me to follow him to Swamiji’s cottage. As we walked across the grass, under the trees toward the white cottage, I expected to be led to a cool, shady room, incense burning, Swami seated in meditation.

“But, my guide steered me slightly to the side of the

cottage, toward a small yellow tractor standing in the bright sunshine. Suddenly, my eyes focused on an orange form of a man, with long black hair, crouching beside the machine and working on it like a mechanic. Could this be the Swami? A holy man working on a tractor? I couldn't believe it. The man looked like a *swami* with his orange clothing and long hair but there was a screwdriver in his hand. He seemed to be scraping mud out of the air filter with it. I just couldn't understand it. Ramakrishna wouldn't even touch money with his hands but this *swami* was actually working on a tractor. The boy said something to him. I heard the word "Swamiji," so I knew this must be the Swami. Then the boy left. I was completely confused. I didn't know what to do. To my relief, Swamiji didn't seem to notice me much. He just kept working on the tractor. There was a tool kit laid open beside him on the grass. After a while, I sat down in a cross-legged position a few feet from him, waiting for him to say something. In the silence, I began to adjust to the situation. This was the first *swami* I had ever seen in my life. If I had been introduced to him in a cool, shady room with incense burning, probably I would have been frightened speechless. But outside in the fresh air and bright sunlight, my awkward feeling melted away but my mind felt numb.

"Swamiji gently asked me a few questions about where I was from and so on. It was relaxing to start off with something easy instead of how to find God. He asked me how I had come to the *ashram*. 'I walked,' meaning from the bus stop. 'From New York?' 'Well, no,' I had to answer. 'A friend loaned me some money for a bus ticket.' Swami asked me how I could be free if I had to beg for money. What right did I have to beg for money when I had strong hands to work? 'Look,' he said. 'I am repairing this tractor, rather than calling a mechanic from town. Be independent and not a burden on anyone.' I was simply amazed. Really, this wasn't the kind of *swami* I had expected at all—one who would tell me to go out and get a job! If I got a

job, wouldn't that mean accumulating personal possessions again? Such as a pair of glasses to see with? I told Swami of renouncing all my personal possessions. 'And what,' he said, 'did you do with your glasses. Throw them away, I suppose?' How did he know that? He smiled and said, 'Swamis are full of surprises.' As if to prove it again, he called to someone in the cottage to bring him his glasses. His glasses? Swami wears glasses? A girl brought them and held them out to Swami. To my ever increasing surprise, he didn't take them right away. For about thirty seconds the girl silently held them motionless in the air, directly in front of my gaze, as if Swamiji purposely wanted me to notice them. I began to think 'Who am I to be without glasses when even Swami uses them? Who am I to be without work when even Swami works? I'll go get a job to be independent and not a burden on anyone. If I don't follow his advice, I can't call him my *guru* and he won't be pleased with me.' Swami must have known I was trying to make such a decision. He said, 'Yes, go and get a job. Be independent. I will help you.' 'You said you would help me,' I repeated. 'These are the words I wanted to hear.' I felt ready to make any sacrifice to please him, even to go and get a job. I realized he would not be an easy *guru* and not at all what I had imagined, but my heart told me to follow him."

Everywhere, things are happening well. Our people who have taken up the Institute work are showing real interest. I seem to feel there is a great hope that many more centers will come up.

The IYI set off, pioneer-style, for the West Coast. During the summer of 1919, Krishna and Narayan traveled to Los Angeles, Shree and Vijay to San Francisco. Ishwara, Kanaiah and Ramana set up an Institute in Canton, Connecticut and another one was started in Montclair, New Jersey.

In July, Swamiji flew to Detroit, addressing a convention of two hundred Catholic nuns. Hawaii. Los Angeles for lectures, t.v. appearances and interviews. The Esalen Institute at Big Sur. Radio programs in San Francisco. *Mantra* initiations.

Shree, Vijay and Shanti climbed with Swamiji to the top of a hill in Live Oak Park, Berkeley, California. Shree had packed a picnic lunch and they sat down. For some reason, sun position or view, they decided to find another spot. As they gathered themselves together, Swami spotted a man attempting to climb a nearby tree. High up, amongst the leaves, clung two terrified Siamese cats. Swamiji walked to the tree and spread his blanket.

"Just throw them down. I'll catch them."

He caught the first cat in his arms. The second bounced into the blanket. He shook it off, spread it once again and the man sat to join them for lunch.

Max Yasgur's cow pasture. The Woodstock Festival-Aquarian Exposition. Three days of free music, free food, freedom. When the fences couldn't hold back close to half a million young people, the promoters chopped up the ticket booth for fire wood. Miles of tents, green and red and blue and orange were on the hills. Open kitchens for cereals and vegetables. The sun burned down until it poured rain. The ground turned to mire. But good spirit and love consciousness never faltered.

Swamiji opened the festival. As the roads were too choked for his car to pass a police escort drove him toward the site, sirens screaming. A boy fell off the back of a speeding car. Swamiji sat by him, rubbing his head gently, soothingly. He blessed a glass of water and fed it to the boy. When the roads became too clogged even for the police, a special helicopter was pressed into service, lifting Swamiji high into the air, above the hundreds and hundreds of cars parked every which way, thousands and thousands of people milling like tiny ants below. And how he loved it—this motionless soaring above the festival—descending finally into the

midst of it. Backstage, he sat on a makeshift wooden step-ladder, waiting to go on. Out front were 400,000.

"My beloved sisters and brothers, I am overwhelmed with joy to see the youth of America gathered here in the name of the fine art, music. In fact, through music we can work wonders. Music is the celestial sound, and it is sound that controls the whole universe, not atomic vibrations. Sound energy, sound power, is much, much greater than any other power in the world.

"One thing I very much wish you all to remember—with sound we can make and, at the same time, break. On certain battlefields animal sounds are used. Without such sounds, war-bands, man couldn't become an animal and kill his own brethren.

"So, I am very happy to see that we are all gathered to create some 'making' sounds, to find that peace and joy through the celestial music. I am honored for having been given the opportunity of opening this great, great music festival.

"America leads the world in several ways. Very recently, when I was in the East, the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi asked me, 'What's happening in America?' I said, 'America is becoming a whole. America is helping everybody in the material field, but the time has come for America to help the whole world with spirituality also.'

"That's why across its length and breadth, we see people, thousands and thousands of people, yogaminded, spiritual minded. So let all our actions and all our arts express yoga. Through the sacred art of music, let us find peace that will pervade all over the globe. Often people shout, 'We are going to fight for peace!' I still do not understand how they are going to fight and then find peace. Therefore, let us not fight for peace, but let us find peace within ourselves first.

"The future of the whole world is in your hands. You can make it or break it. But you are really here to make the world and not to break it. There is a dynamic manpower here. Hearts are meeting. Here I really wonder whether I am in the East or West. If pictures of this gathering are shown in India, the people there will cer-

tainly never believe that they were taken in America. For here the East has come into the West.

"I, with all my heart, wish a great, great success to this music festival. Let it pave the way for many more festivals in other parts of the country. I have met the organizers and I admire them. They have come forward to do a job, but the entire event is in your hands, not in the hands of just a few men. The entire world is going to watch this. The entire world is going to know what the American youth can do for humanity. Everyone of you should feel responsibility for the outcome of this festival.

"Once again, let me express my sincere wish and prayers for the success and peace of this celebration. Thank you."

Normally, in the spiritual way, a mantra is selected for you by a *guru*, an adept, guide or Master. You might think, 'Can't we select it ourselves?' You are certainly at liberty to do that. But still, there is an advantage in going to a Master. When he selects something for you, he gives it a little momentum duly charged with his own vibration.

Swami conducted a three-day seminar at a nunnery in Quebec, Canada—St. Augustine's. Lectures, *hatha* classes, discussions. At one meeting, he explained the theory of *mantra* yoga. The following day, early, he was to leave for Val Morin, Canada. A number of sisters came forward. They asked to be initiated. Thirty-five showed up at 6 a.m. for the ceremony. He was very happy with such an attendance.

"You really understand the universality of it. *Mantra* doesn't pertain to any particular religion. Rather, it is based on sound vibration."

Saint Ramakrishna used to tell this story. Once, a number of people went to a huge fruit garden, surrounded by a high wall. They were told many delicious fruits and delicacies abounded within. Slowly, a

number of people went to the wall and started to climb. With great difficulty, they reached the top. As soon as they looked over, they could see hundreds of ripe mangoes, papayas, pomegranates, trees bending low with red apples, cherries, bushes bursting with berries. Looking at this lush array, these men lost control and, abandoning themselves to temptation, each jumped in—one after the other. But a handful, reaching the top, refused to jump in. They thought, 'If I jump, what will happen to all the thousands of people outside?' And they called to the crowds, 'Hey, everybody, everything is within this garden. It is a divine garden. Come, come on. All of you. See how I reached the top. First, one foot on this stone, another on that.' They acted as guides, leading the thousands below, helping them climb to the top, step by step. And until everybody climbed into the garden, they themselves wouldn't budge.

Such people are the prophets, the *avatars*. And that is their mission. Until all the others have jumped in, they just watch and guide. They are satisfied to see the joy of those they lead.

"The True World Order and Its Actualization" was held at Swami Vishnudevananda's yoga camp August 30th to September 4th. It was a summit conference of *gurus*: Swami Vishnu, Swamiji, Swami Chidananda of Rishikesh, Swami Venkatesananda of Mauritius, Swami Sivapremananda of New York, Swami Pranavananda of Malaysia, Swami Sahajananda of South Africa. Six hundred students pitched their tents among the trees and participated in the program of meditation, lectures and *asanas*.

This meeting was both a re-union of Divine Life Society branch leaders and initiates of Swami Sivanandaji, most of whom had not seen one another since their days at Rishikesh—a meeting to exchange ideas about various ways and means of reaching the greatest number of people.

Swami Vishnu, as he is constantly traveling amongst his three centers in Canada, New York and the Bahamas, has a private airplane. He flew the *swamis* over the area, giving them eagle's views of Canada.

Late in September, Swamiji embarked on a European tour. His first stop was Denmark—Esbjerg, Copenhagen. In Aarhus, he answered a question concerning the nature of death.

"I believe in life after death, but I do not think it is very important. Because, if you do not know about life now, why should you know about life later? If you take care of today, your tomorrow will be taken care of. Why should you think of tomorrow? Think of the golden present. Lead a good life now. Likewise, forget the past. What is past is already gone. But what you sow today, you reap tomorrow."

He visited the IYI in Le Havre, France, and lectured in Paris.

After a lecture in Toulon, he agreed to visit the Ham-sananda Ashram, supposedly on his route to the Marseilles Airport, where he was due the following evening.

The *ashram* was housed in a venerable, multi-storied chateau. After lunch, Swamiji's hostess showed him to a room wherein he could rest.

"You know," he said, "in this room, they used to kill rabbits." After lunch, he rejoined the group.

"Did you have a nice rest?"

"Yes. I did. But there were rabbits crawling all over me."

At the appropriate time, Swamiji prepared to leave for the airport. The sister of Swami's hostess was commandeered to drive the car. She was neither sure of the way nor how to handle a big car such as this. A devotee of the *ashram* offered to lead the way in his car. Swamiji drove the hostess' car. Rush hour traffic. Miles of cars, bumper to bumper, along the twisting, mountainous roads. With a half-hour's drive left, the guide lost

his way. Swamiji's car stalled. Everyone had to push to start it again. The gas tank was practically on zero. Finally, the accelerator caught. Swamiji handled the car like Juan Fangio, weaving expertly, down-shifting through the traffic.

At the airport, he grabbed his baggage and sprinted to the check-out. A hostess was standing behind the desk. "You'll have to wait, sir. Your plane has been delayed."

At Milano Airport, he was greeted with the passion only Italians can manifest. One hundred and fifty students awaited him, chanting, ringing bells, playing flutes and drums.

Bergamo . . . Verona . . . Padua . . . Florence . . . Rome.

Switzerland. "If I am not interested in deep meditation and getting into a higher spiritual life, should I do *asanas* and breathing? I am interested only in eating, drinking, sleeping, doing my business and getting more money. Can yoga help me?"

"Sure. Yoga will help you eat well, digest well, sleep well—without pills—and save a lot of money on the doctor bills. By sleeping well, you can get up well refreshed, early in the morning, without ever missing your bus to the office. Also we should have sound health in our daily life. We should have a mind well-trained in concentration. Yoga has practical hints to the physical body, vital body, emotional mind and reasoning mind. It helps the entire person. It makes him peaceful."

England. The last country on the tour. He lectured at the University of Surrey to a room crammed mainly with long-haired students. One middle-aged, crewcut-shorn man asked:

"Swamiji, why do you keep your hair so long?"

"I don't keep it. I don't do anything to it. It just grows."

"Hmmm."

"I could ask you the same thing. Why do you cut your hair?"

"I don't want to put the barbers out of business."

"I don't want to tire them out."

Applause and cheering from the audience.

One of his last European lectures was to London's flower children at Gandolf's Garden. All shiny long hair and homemade clothing.

"I want to express my happiness for being with you. I feel a real loving vibration here and a spirit of oneness. I feel like I am again sitting in my apartment in New York, surrounded by my children there. I missed that since the past few weeks in my European tour. Because I love the youngsters. Somehow, I feel that an unseen force has brought me and is pushing me to serve the youth. Every day I feel more and more happy in such service. If I can be of any use to you, if I can do anything for you within my capacity, I would always like to do so. Please feel that I am one of you. Do not think I am something high or superior. Treat me as your own brother."

He returned to New York for his birthday celebration. Hundreds of orange helium balloons sailed about the Universalist Church, "Om Shanti" upon them. There was dancing and yoga-rock and a magician who conjured up a live rabbit for one of the children.

"An Indian *guru* 'turned on' 500 persons at Foothill College with admonitions to forget the self and seek true peace of mind through service and purity of body through changed habits. The *guru's* followers were mostly young, hip and captivated by his observations on technology, the mind, and his often funny illustrations on man's shortcomings. He told the college theater audience, 'any idea that is built on selfishness will disturb your mind.'"—*San Jose News*.

Back to the California centers on December 28th. After initiation of twenty-five people at the San Francisco center, they gave him their most prized possessions—a pocket knife, a copy of the Beatles' "Abbey Road" album.

He gave two radio interviews and married a young couple during a New Year's Eve party. In L.A., he taped an hour long documentary t.v. show.

Mt. Shasta is believed to be one of the seven main spiritual points on the earth. Swamiji drove to the glacial top with Shanti, Vijay and Shree. They rode the skilift over the quiet snow into the silent air. Swami sat in the snow, meditating. The summit was thick with *prana*. Shanti said, "It was like having a meditation laid on you."

He lectured in Portland, Oregon, and Burlingame, California. He filled all four rooms of the Das Ashram bookshop. A speaker system was set up so that those in the last two rooms could hear him, though they couldn't see him. There were talks at the East-West Cultural Center, the Unitarian Church, the Happy Valley School. The L.A. IYI and Help Restaurant prepared a farewell banquet for Swamiji. Over three hundred people attended.

"Meditation is capturing the meaning of inner peace. It is entirely controlling egotistical thoughts. Capturing all love. Some people ask why Swami Gi can control his body. Maybe he has strong muscles. No, no. I believe strongly that if you can dedicate your mind as strongly as he can to one subject you will be able to do it too!

"You will find Swami Gi is the symbol of inner peace. In a way peace is written on his face. He contributes his life to a peaceful world.

"He has no place in his vision for immoral thoughts.

Swami never has a warlike face to show! He carries the truth of yoga!

"I believe he wishes to start the Tranquillity Generation. To look into his eyes makes bad thoughts wash away and tranquilized thoughts flow in, like a wave on the ocean shore. He can always purify your body.

"This man I do believe is a Gift from the gods. He is here for one reason, to guide us through the path of peace where he has been. For he is the god of peace in this universe. He is also the god of friendship. The sparkle in his eye leads you to a kaleidoscope fairytale, in a cosmic forest beyond the positive world! and into an endless land of Dreams."

SWAMY'S VISIT

by *Linda Keyes*

Swamy talked about god. He said "that god is in a flower!" And he also said "that god is around you and inside a person." One of his students showed us some of Swamy's exercise. The exercise was really good. Swamy was wearing an orange gown, he had long hair and a long beard. He was 55 years old or about 55 years old. He sat on the back table with his legs crossed. And he started to talk.

Still his children come. The nine year olds and the seventy-nine year olds. They come to his centers in Ceylon, throughout Europe in Switzerland, France and Belgium, in the U.S.—New York, Connecticut, Texas, Los Angeles and San Francisco—through which he travels and does his work, lecturing, instructing, advising. They come to meditate, to practice *asanas* and breathing. But mostly, they come to learn yoga from this Master who has been through all the changes, down all the paths, who has looked for the joy—now permanent—both in the world and out of it: in schools and businesses, in friends and family, through rituals and

rules and a succession of teachers. A *guru* who can advise his children on any facet of their lives or practices, who can lead them to Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, who can lead them to Satchidananda.

The hour before dawn is the blackest time of night. A great change has already begun. We are living now amongst violence and confusion but we are on the brink of a great age of spirituality. Whenever we take a young plant from its nursery and re-plant it elsewhere, the plant withers. Many of the leaves fall off. But that doesn't mean it is dying. Till it gets rooted, the plant shakes a bit and trembles. But it must face that shaking and overcome it, because it can't come to full growth in the nursery itself. Young people today are being transplanted into another area altogether, and so we see this shaking. We see it all over the globe. But I see a very bright future. All the shaking will cease. Slowly, slowly, we are getting re-rooted, in the right place, with the right ideas. Consciousness is everywhere expanding. And America is going to lead the way. It is time for the West to show the East. There is great peace here and love. And we can spread this peace everywhere, all over the world. The West has realized the superficiality of the material life. The West is crying for 'true knowledge and is getting it. I have a great hope. There is great awakening. The whole world is going to enjoy the peace through you people. Day by day I see it progressing. All these calamities, all these wars, will come to an end. And we will all soon be enjoying the bliss of that peaceful sunshine, no doubt.



